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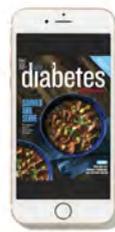
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48.2%

Percentage of type 2 diabetes-related deaths that could have been prevented by a healthy diet.

Source: JAMA



IT TAKES TWO

Need some extra help with your blood sugar? Get your spouse on board. When couples take on activities together that could help control blood sugar—such as planning healthy meals or working out—the spouse with type 2 diabetes has better glycemic control than in couples that don't commit to healthy choices together.

Source: *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*

5,300

NUMBER of new cases of type 2 diabetes in kids ages 10 to 19 every year in the U.S. That's up from 3,800 cases per year a decade ago.

Source: JAMA



SURGERY SUCCESS

For people who are obese, bariatric surgery might be more effective in treating type 2 diabetes than medication and diet. Researchers assigned 150 people with type 2 diabetes and a body mass index of 27 to 43 to diet and medication or one of two weight loss surgeries: gastric bypass or sleeve gastrectomy. Five years later, 5% of those in the medicine-only group had achieved their blood sugar goals. About 25% of those in the surgery groups had improved or eliminated their diabetes. They had lower blood sugar and cholesterol, greater weight loss and quality of life, and used less insulin.

Source: *New England Journal of Medicine*



THE POWER OF ASPIRIN

Women who have type 2 diabetes may be at greater risk of developing breast cancer. An aspirin a day could reduce that risk. Researchers analyzed 10 years of health records for nearly 150,000 women with diabetes. Those who took 75 to 165 milligrams of aspirin each day were 18% less likely to develop breast cancer over the 10-year study period than those who didn't.

Source: *Journal of Women's Health*

BRING ON THE FATTY FISH

Over time, too much sugar in your blood from type 2 diabetes can damage your eyes and possibly lead to vision loss. Eating two servings of fatty fish per week, such as salmon and tuna, could slash risk for this complication in half. Researchers tracked the diets of 3,482 adults with type 2 diabetes for six years. Those who took in 500 milligrams of omega-3 fatty acids per day—the equivalent of two servings of fatty fish per week—were 48% less likely to develop eye conditions during the six-year study.

Source: *JAMA*

5% to 10%

Percentage of body weight loss that could improve your blood sugar control and reduce the amount of medication you need. That's just 10 to 20 pounds for a 200-pound person.

Source: CDC

ASK YOUR DOCTOR

Could I benefit from medications that stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin? Medications such as sulfonylureas and meglitinides are recommended only if your pancreas is capable of producing insulin.

Can I live without a pancreas? Some people can. But they need daily insulin injections and digestive enzyme supplements to make up for the missing organ. Pancreas transplants are available, usually for patients with type 1 diabetes, but they are less common than other organ transplants, says endocrinologist Fernando Ovalle, MD.

Can I improve insulin resistance? Scientists don't fully understand what causes insulin resistance. But in some cases exercise and weight loss can make your cells more responsive to insulin.

Which symptoms indicate a problem with my pancreas? Pancreatic diseases can be tough to diagnose because they may come with few symptoms. But these may include mid-back pain, upper abdominal pain, nausea, and diarrhea.

The Pancreas

Learn more about this often-overlooked organ

BY ERIN O'DONNELL

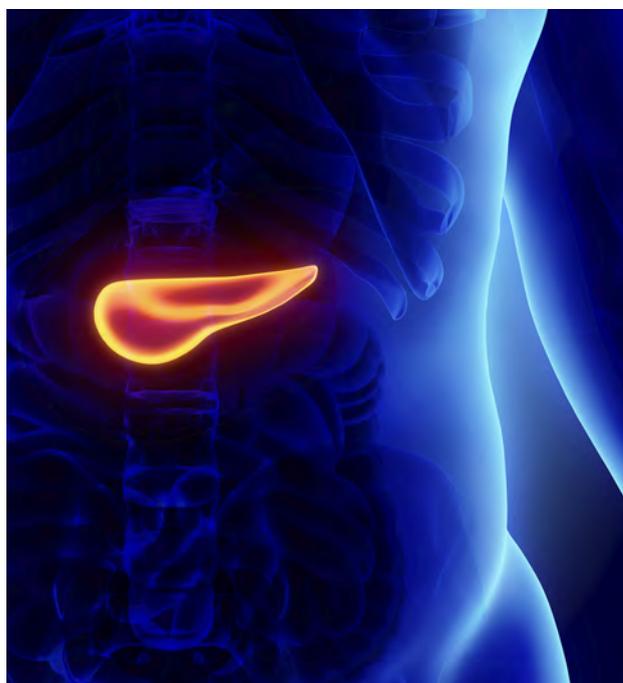
Chances are you didn't give your pancreas much thought—until you were diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. This long, flat, spongy organ is hidden deep in the upper abdomen between the stomach and spine.

“People don't necessarily give the pancreas the respect it deserves,” says endocrinologist Fernando Ovalle, MD, director of the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Multidisciplinary Comprehensive Diabetes Clinic. “But it's an extremely important organ.” Despite its low-key reputation, the pancreas plays two key functions: controlling blood sugar and assisting digestion.

Most of the pancreas is devoted to making and pumping out enzymes that help your body digest food. These include protease, designed to break down protein; lipase, which digests fats; and amylase, which attacks carbohydrates. A much smaller portion of the pancreas is dedicated to producing hormones such as insulin and glucagon, which regulate blood sugar levels.

These hormones are made in the pancreas in small clusters of cells called the Islets of Langerhans and then released into the blood stream. One cell type found in the islets, the beta cell, senses the amount of sugar in the blood and then makes and releases insulin. The insulin acts like a key, opening glucose channels in the body's cells so they can take up glucose for energy.

In people with type 2 diabetes, cells stop responding as well to insulin, a condition known



as insulin resistance, leaving sugar locked out of the cells and circulating in the blood stream. The beta cells sense the increase in blood glucose levels and release more and more insulin. “But sooner or later the pancreas cannot keep up with the blood glucose,” and fails to produce enough insulin, Ovalle says. This scenario triggers diabetes. In some cases, a condition known as chronic pancreatitis, or long-term inflammation of the pancreas, can cause diabetes by damaging the organ's insulin-producing cells.

Some medications for type 2 diabetes stimulate beta cells in the pancreas to produce more insulin. These drugs include sulfonylureas, which you take once or twice a day, usually before meals, and meglitinides, taken three times a day before each meal.

Ovalle notes that unlike other organs in the abdomen, such as the kidneys or the liver, much is still unknown about the pancreas, and by extension, diabetes. “We've been able to classify liver and kidney diseases very well through biopsies,” he explains. “We cannot do that with the pancreas because it is not as accessible,” he says, and removing samples of the pancreas to study them elevates a person's risk for pancreatitis, a potentially life-threatening condition.

Researchers are currently considering ways to repair or replace the pancreas in patients with diabetes; one area of study involves transplanting healthy Islets of Langerhans from a donor pancreas into people with diabetes.

➔ Search for [Picture of the Pancreas](#) at WebMD.com.

REVIEWED BY BRUNILDA NAZARIO, MD, WEBMD LEAD MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Tech Genius

Enlist technology to help you get the most out of your workouts

BY KARA MAYER ROBINSON

ASK YOUR DOCTOR

Ready to invest in gadgets, gizmos, or coaches? Your doctor can help you make the right choices.

Can I count on diabetes gear like CGMs and smart glucometers to read my levels accurately?

How can I use my diabetes data to develop my fitness plan?

What factors may impact my workout routine? Is it helpful to log my meals and the time of day when I work out?

What goals should I strive for with the help of an online coach?



Your diabetes toolbox is about to bulk up.

“The medical technology field has been booming,” says diabetes coach and speaker Daniele Hargenrader, CPT. A slew of new high-tech gear and gadgets won’t just help you manage your blood sugar. They can also streamline your fitness program, says Hargenrader. Take a look:

Continuous glucose monitors

Continuous glucose monitors (CGMs) are wearable devices that track your glucose levels and send real-time feedback to a receiver or smartphone. Hargenrader recommends pairing a CGM with a smart watch, which is easy to glance at when you’re moving and sweating. “While you’re running, you can look at your wrist and see your blood sugar,” says

Hargenrader. If your levels get too high or low, you can quickly adjust your activity.

Smart glucometers

High-tech glucometers from companies like Dario, Livongo, and One Drop simplify blood sugar testing with disposable test strips and portability. You can also use them for insight on exercising safely.

You upload your glucometer readings into your smartphone and log details, like what you eat, when you eat, and what time you worked out, into an app. Then you get insight into which factors impact your levels. “You can look back and see what your blood sugar was. Then you can adjust what you do,” says Hargenrader. For example, if your levels are best after a small meal, you can eat something before your next workout.

High-tech clothing

If you wear an insulin pump and the hassle of carrying it deters you from hitting the gym, high-tech threads may be just what the doctor ordered.

“A lot of clothing lines now have pockets for insulin pumps. You can tuck them away and they’re hidden,” says Hargenrader. Pocket Innerwear, for example, has an entire line of insulin-pump wear, she notes.

You can also stash glucose tablets, gel, or your cell phone into tank tops, running shorts, and other clothing with built-in gear pockets.

Mobile resources

“Online coaching is a huge tool,” says Hargenrader, who runs coaching sessions via Google Hangouts and Skype. An online coach can create a personalized program, set goals, and check in with you regularly.

Some companies, like Livongo and One Drop, have experts on call. If you have questions or need support, you send a message through your smartphone app, then a certified diabetes educator responds within 24 hours.

You’ll also find peer support online. Try joining a Facebook diabetes fitness group, a chat room, or a support group at the Diabetes Hands Foundation’s website, tudiabetes.org.

It’s an exciting time, says Hargenrader, who has lived with diabetes for 26 years. “Technology has allowed me to take my fitness to another level,” she says. “There are a lot of options. They’re game-changers.”

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL SMITH, MD, CPT, WEBMD CHIEF MEDICAL DIRECTOR

SKIN SMARTS

What's the best way to fight infections that cause skin problems? Try these tips.

Check your feet and any areas of your body that get damp and sweaty every day.

Use moisturizer on dry skin daily to keep it from cracking and itching.

Don't try to treat skin infections at home with over-the-counter products, because they may not be strong enough.

If you think you have an infection anywhere on your body, call your doctor.

Protect Your Skin

If you have diabetes, diligent skin care is crucial

BY BRENDA CONAWAY

Diabetes gives you a good reason to pamper your skin. You're more prone to skin problems like dryness. And because diabetes raises your chances of infection, even a minor skin condition can become a more serious problem. This guide will fill you in on common skin conditions linked to diabetes and how to prevent them—or care for yourself if you do get them.

Skin conditions

Diabetic dermopathy

This appears as light brown, scaly, round spots on the shins. They look a lot like age spots but are caused by changes in the small blood vessels. "It's more of a cosmetic issue and doesn't really require treatment," says Margo S. Hudson, MD, an instructor at Harvard Medical School.

Disseminated granuloma annulare

This causes red, red-brown, or skin-colored raised rings or arcs on the skin. They're likely to show up on your fingers, ears, or lower legs, but can also appear on the trunk of your body. Your doctor can prescribe a cortisone skin cream or another treatment.

Digital sclerosis

About one-third of people with type 1 diabetes have this condition. It can make the skin on the back of the hands thick, waxy, and tight. Your finger joints may become stiff and hard to move.



You can also get it on your forehead and toes and, more rarely, your elbows, knees, or ankles. To treat it, get your blood sugar under control.

Acanthosis nigricans

With this condition, the skin on your neck, armpits, or groin thickens and becomes brown or tan. "People think it's dirt and wonder why they can't clean it off," Hudson says. Insulin resistance causes it, and it's most likely if you are overweight. Treatment includes losing weight and taking diabetes drugs, which help the body use insulin better.

Skin infections

Bacterial skin infections are common with diabetes, says Betul Hatipoglu, MD, of the Endocrinology and Metabolic Institute at Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. "It can be as simple as a boil in the armpit or on the face, infection of the hair follicles, or infection of the nail bed," she says.

Fungal infections are common, too, she says. You are most likely to have them in areas that get hot and sweaty, including under the breasts, between fingers and toes, in the armpits, in the groin area, and around the tip of the penis, if you are an uncircumcised man.

➔ Search for the slideshow **What Your Skin Says About Your Health** at WebMD.com.

REVIEWED BY BRUNILDA NAZARIO, MD, WEBMD LEAD MEDICAL DIRECTOR



BY Kerri-Ann Jennings
REVIEWED by Hansa Bhargava, MD
WebMD Senior Medical Director

SIMMER & SERVE

STIR THE POT WITH THESE STEW RECIPES

A bubbling pot of fragrant, hearty stew is sure to warm the chilliest fall days.

And while we have you covered with three new recipes to try, all follow a simple formula you can adapt based on what you have on hand. Start with a Dutch oven (or any heavy-bottomed pot with a lid) and a drizzle of oil, then add aromatics, a protein, more veggies, and enough liquid to cover. Simmer until you're ready for dinner.

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICK LOZIER; FOOD STYLING: CHARLIE WORTHINGTON



MOROCCAN EGGPLANT STEW WITH GREEN CHICKPEAS

This cinnamon-laced stew is chock-full of veggie goodness. If you can find them in the freezer section, try green chickpeas, which are picked earlier than the yellow ones you're used to and have fewer carbohydrates per cup. Serve with whole-wheat couscous, and top with plain yogurt, toasted sliced almonds, and a poached egg for extra protein. **SERVES 6**

2 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, diced
1 tbsp grated fresh ginger
2 tsp cinnamon
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp sea salt
1 medium eggplant, cut into 1-inch chunks
2 tbsp tomato paste
3 cups vegetable stock
1 14-oz can crushed tomatoes
2 cups frozen green chickpeas
(or 1 14-oz can of regular chickpeas,
drained and rinsed)
½ cup golden raisins
Zest from 1 lemon

OPTIONAL FOR GARNISH
Toasted sliced almonds
Plain yogurt
Fresh chives
Chopped cilantro

Heat a Dutch oven or large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add olive oil. When olive oil has warmed, add onion and sauté for several minutes. Add ginger, cinnamon, garlic, cumin, paprika, and salt and cook for another minute. Add eggplant and tomato paste and stir. Cook for several minutes, and stir to keep from sticking. Add vegetable stock and tomatoes and simmer until eggplant is tender. Add chickpeas, raisins, and lemon zest and cook several minutes until heated through. If you like, garnish with almonds, yogurt, chopped cilantro, and/or fresh chives.

Nutrition info (stew only): 216 calories, 8 g protein, 33 g carbohydrate, 6 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 495 mg sodium, 9 g fiber, 11 g sugar; calories from fat: 26%



PORK, HOMINY, AND TOMATILLO STEW

Using ground pork makes this flavorful stew easy to prepare, while hominy helps add some extra body.

SERVES 4

- 2 tbsp canola oil
- 1 medium white onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 pound ground pork tenderloin
- 1 jalapeño, seeds removed, minced
- 2 tsp no-salt-added chile powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 pound tomatillos, husks removed, chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro leaves and stems, minced
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 (14- to 15-oz) can hominy, drained and rinsed

OPTIONAL FOR SERVING

- Cotija cheese
- Cilantro



➤ Search for the article **5 Food Hacks for Diabetes** at WebMD.com.

Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion and green pepper and sauté for several minutes until onion is translucent. Add pork, jalapeño, chile powder, cumin, garlic, and salt and cook for a couple of minutes until pork begins to brown. Add tomatillos and cilantro, then chicken stock. Reduce heat to medium-low, partially cover and simmer until tomatillos are fully cooked, at least 20 minutes. Add hominy and heat through. If you like, top with cotija and/or cilantro to serve.

Nutrition info (stew only): 331 calories, 35 g protein, 21 g carbohydrate, 10 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 74 mg cholesterol, 611 mg sodium, 3 g fiber, 5 g sugar; calories from fat: 52%



CHICKEN STEW WITH RED WINE AND MUSHROOMS

This healthy, streamlined version of coq au vin brings the south of France into your weeknight kitchen. Serve over steamed golden potatoes or, for the lowest-carb meal, cauliflower rice. **SERVES 4**

2 tbsp olive oil
1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces
2 medium carrots, peeled and diced
2 medium parsnips, peeled and diced
1 onion, peeled and diced
8 oz mushrooms, sliced
2 tsp herbes de Provence
½ tsp salt
1 cup red wine
3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add chicken, carrots, parsnips, and onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for several minutes until chicken begins to brown. Add mushrooms, herbes de Provence, and salt. Pour red wine over and simmer for several minutes. Add chicken broth and lower heat to medium-low. Continue to simmer for 20 to 30 minutes.

Nutrition info: 369 calories, 39 g protein, 16 g carbohydrate, 11 g fat (4 g saturated fat), 97 mg cholesterol, 459 mg sodium, 4 g fiber, 6 g sugar; calories from fat: 27%



ASK YOUR DOCTOR

1. How often should I see you for foot exams?

2. How should I care for my feet at home?

3. What kinds of shoes are best for my feet?

4. What can I do if I have foot problems?

Foot Facts

People with diabetes need to pay special heed to their heels and toes. The condition can leave feet dry, cracked, and peeling. You can also develop sores and ulcers you might not feel because of nerve damage. Take the quiz to help you care for your feet.

QUIZ

1. How often should you check your feet?

- Once a month
- Once a week
- Once a day

2. Where should you apply lotion?

- All over your feet
- On the tops and bottoms of your feet
- Between your toes

3. What's the best way to treat corns and calluses?

- Cut them off with a razor blade
- Use a liquid corn or callus remover
- See your podiatrist

4. How should you cut your toenails?

- On a diagonal
- In a curve
- Straight across

ANSWERS

1. Once a day. Cuts, sores, and blisters can pop up on your feet, and if you have nerve damage, you might not feel them until they get infected. Give your feet a thorough check every day. Look for cracks, sores, cuts, and blisters. Have trouble seeing the bottoms of your feet? Ask your partner to help or use a mirror.

2. On the tops and bottoms of your feet. Apply a thin layer of cream, lotion, or petroleum jelly to the tops and bottoms of your feet daily to keep your skin soft and supple. Don't put cream between your toes, because the moisture could encourage fungus growth. Instead, sprinkle talcum powder or cornstarch between the toes to keep the area dry.

3. See your podiatrist. Corns and calluses are thickened areas of skin on the feet that hurt when they rub up against shoes. Don't try to cut or burn them off yourself—you could injure your skin and cause an infection. Instead, make an appointment with your podiatrist to take care of these growths.

4. Straight across. Cut your toenails straight across and smooth the edges with a file. That way, they can't grow and cut into your skin. If you have trouble trimming your toenails, stop and ask your foot doctor to take over the job.

REVIEWED BY AREFA CASSOOBHOY, MD MPH, WEBMD SENIOR MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Find Dr. Right

You and your health provider are partners. Take the time to locate the best one for you.

BY MICHELE COHEN MARILL

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR OR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

What choices do I have in my treatment?

Where can I get diabetes education and peer support?

What other health professionals will be involved in my care?

What information do you want me to bring to my medical exams?

Can I have my lab work completed before my appointment so we can discuss it?

Life with diabetes is a journey, and your diabetes specialist serves as your guide, connecting you with the tools and support you need to stay healthy. Choosing an endocrinologist or other practitioner may be one of the most important decisions you make.

When Christel Marchand Aprigliano of Tampa, Florida, has an appointment with a new provider, she observes his or her body language. Arms folded, eyes averted, hand on the doorknob? Those signs point to someone who isn't fully engaged.

A good encounter feels comfortable. "They'll look you in the eye when they talk to you. They will talk to you in layman's terms. They will assess your level of understanding with what's going on with your health care," says Aprigliano, 46, who was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at the age of 12. She is CEO of the Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition and writes a blog on living with diabetes.

Seek a provider who is knowledgeable about diabetes and treats patients with similar medical needs. That person might be an endocrinologist, but be aware that not all endocrinologists specialize in diabetes. Some treat mostly thyroid disease. You might find a good match with a primary care physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant who focuses on diabetes care.

Trust your instincts. A health provider who makes you feel ashamed of your weight or guilty about your blood sugar levels isn't treating you as if you're in this together. Practitioners should seek to solve problems through shared decision-making, says Hope Warshaw, RD, a certified diabetes educator in Alexandria, Virginia.

"They have the understanding that this is a very challenging disease," says Warshaw, author of five books on diabetes, including *Diabetes Meal Planning Made Easy*. They say, "Here are our choices. What do you think would work better in your life?"

Beyond the medical exam, your provider should connect you with a diabetes educator who will help you stay on track with your goals. You may need referrals to other specialists, such as a podiatrist or ophthalmologist.

You share responsibility, too. Come to your appointments with your blood glucose meter or blood sugar log, a list of questions or concerns, and any prescription renewals you need, advises Aprigliano. "We have an obligation to help make that relationship stronger," she says.



REVIEWED BY AREFA CASSOOBHOY, MD, WEBMD SENIOR MEDICAL DIRECTOR



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Test Prep

Get the scoop on routine tests, exams, and shots and how they help you manage diabetes

BY AMANDA GARDNER



If you have diabetes, taking care of yourself at home and getting regular checkups are key to staying healthy.

During office visits, your doctor will order or do tests to detect any problems so they can be treated before they become bigger issues. If you find them early enough, most can be managed with diet, exercise, or medication.

A1C test

This blood test tells you and your doctor what your blood sugar levels have been during the past two or three months. While you probably test it every day, that only shows what your levels are at that point in time.

The result is given as a percentage—the higher the percentage, the higher your blood sugar levels have been. In general, the goal is for your A1C level to be less than 7%.

The American Diabetes Association recommends you have this test at least twice a year.

Blood pressure

You should check your blood

pressure regularly at home. But your doctor also will check it each time you visit the office. You can have high blood pressure without knowing it. Generally, your first number (systolic) should be less than 140. Your second number (diastolic) should be under 90. If you have high blood pressure and it's not managed well, such as with lifestyle changes or medication, you're more likely to have heart disease or a stroke.

Cholesterol and triglycerides

These types of fat can collect in your arteries and lead to heart problems and stroke. Your doctor will want to check three things with a blood test at least once a year: HDL ("good") cholesterol, LDL ("bad") cholesterol, and triglycerides. You want your LDL level to be less than 100 and your triglyceride level to be less than 150. On the flip side, a man's HDL should be higher than 40, and a woman's should be higher than 50.

High blood sugar levels can lead to higher levels of triglycerides. Talk with your doctor about

where your numbers are and what they should be.

Kidney function test

This test measures a kind of protein called albumin (or microalbumin) with a urine test. If high blood sugar and blood pressure damage your kidneys, albumin leaks out. You should have this test at least once a year.

Your doctor also may give you a GFR (glomerular filtration rate) test that can tell you if your kidneys are filtering blood as they should.

Foot exam

Your doctor should check your feet thoroughly at least once a year. Over time, diabetes can cause nerve damage. This can make you lose feeling in your feet. If that happens, you may not notice cuts, bruises, or other problems. If they're not treated, these can become bigger problems. The condition can also limit the blood flow to your feet, which makes it harder for a sore or infection to heal.

REVIEWED BY MINESH KHATRI, MD, WEBMD MEDICAL REVIEWER



Weight

Being overweight may be one of the reasons you developed diabetes. It can also make the condition worse. Like blood pressure and blood sugar, you should check your weight at home. But your doctor will also want to get a reading at every office visit. It's easier to control your blood sugar and blood pressure if you're at a healthy weight.

Flu shot and other vaccinations

Most adults should get a flu shot every fall. That's especially true if you have diabetes. The condition weakens your immune system so it's harder for your body to fight off infections. Also, it can be harder to control your blood sugar when you're sick.

Your doctor also might recommend the pneumococcal vaccine. It protects you against infections caused by the pneumococcus bacteria like pneumonia, meningitis, and some ear infections.

Talk with your doctor about other vaccines you may need. They might include:

- Hepatitis B
- Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis)
- Zoster (shingles)
- MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella)
- Varicella (chicken pox)
- HPV (human papillomavirus)

Gum and teeth exams

Diabetes can damage the blood

vessels in your mouth and lead to gum disease and tooth decay. Tell your dentist if you have diabetes and have a checkup every six months to help spot any problems.

Dilated eye exam

Be sure to tell your eye doctor that you have diabetes. He or she will give you eye drops to widen your pupils to help spot any damage to the blood vessels in your eyes. This should be done every other year.

Your doctor also may want to do a retinal eye exam, which involves taking a detailed picture of your eye. This should be done every two years—or more often if those vessels are already damaged.

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