

## Overview

Damage to the large blood vessels is known as Cardiovascular Disease (CVD). It can occur in people who do not have diabetes. It is much more frequent and happens at an earlier age in people with diabetes. Large blood vessels carry blood to and from the heart and all other parts of the body. They become damaged when fats (cholesterol and triglycerides) are deposited along their inner walls. The blood vessels then become stiff, narrow and less flexible. The damaged blood vessels do not get enough blood to the heart, resulting in a heart attack. When this happens in the blood vessels of the brain, it can lead to a stroke. If this occurs in the large vessels of the legs and feet, it can lead to pain in the calves, ulcers and slow-healing wounds.



# Cardiovascular disease

**OBJECTIVE: Know the risk factors and ways to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.**

## What are the risk factors for heart disease?

- Diabetes
- High Blood Fats
- High Blood Pressure
- Smoking
- Heredity
- Stress
- Inactivity
- Overweight

## Steps you can take to prevent CVD

The best way to prevent heart and blood vessel disease is to take good care of yourself and your diabetes. Below are the things you can do to meet this goal:

- Keep blood sugar levels well controlled. Some problems may be delayed or prevented with improved blood sugar control.
- Stop smoking. If you smoke, the single, most important preventive step is to stop.
- Get regular exercise. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Lose weight if needed. Being overweight increases your risk of heart disease.
- Control high blood pressure. Reduce salt intake if needed. Lose weight and exercise. If needed, your doctor may order medicine to lower your blood pressure.
- Treat blood fat disorders. Follow a low fat diet. Lose weight if needed. Get regular exercise and control blood sugars. Your doctor may prescribe medicine to lower your blood fat levels.
- Check with your doctor about taking an aspirin every day.

## How can your doctor help you?

Talk to your doctor about your risk factors for CVD and how to reduce them. See your doctor at least twice a year. He/she will check your diabetes and any other medical problems. Tell your doctor if you have shortness of breath, chest pain, dizzy spells numbness

# QUIZ

or weakness in an arm or leg. Your doctor may want to check the following at each diabetes visit:

- Blood pressure
- Pulses in feet and legs
- Blood test to check how much fat is in your blood vessels (lipid profile)
- Urine check for kidney problems (microalbumin)

At times, your doctor may order:

- An electrocardiogram (EKG) to check your heart.
- An A1c to check on your diabetes control.
- A stress test to check your heart.

## QUESTIONS

- 1.** Which of the following is not a risk factor for heart disease?
  - a) Smoking
  - b) Diabetes
  - c) Underweight
  - d) High blood fats
- 2.** True or False: Stopping smoking is the single most important step to prevent heart disease.
- 3.** High blood fats can be treated by following what type of diet?

## ANSWERS

- 1.** c
- 2.** True
- 3.** low fat