

# Your Diabetes Resource Guide





# Manage Your Diabetes

**Finding out you have diabetes can be overwhelming. We're here to help.**

**As your partner in health, our goal is to help you stay as healthy as possible so you can get the most out of life. That means providing you with the resources you need to take care of yourself.**

Type 1 diabetes occurs when your pancreas doesn't make or makes very little insulin. Without insulin, your cells can't process the blood glucose in your bloodstream. People with type 2 diabetes still produce their own insulin, but it isn't able to work effectively. In both types, blood glucose can build up in the bloodstream and lead to damaging, long-term complications. Common diabetes treatments for both types focus on diet, activity and medications to regulate your body's sensitivity to insulin and balance your blood glucose levels.

This guide will help you learn about diabetes and the tools available to help you self-manage your health condition as a Medical Mutual member. As you flip through, you'll learn about:

- The Tests You Need to Stay Healthy . . . . . Page 2**
- Maintaining a Healthy Diet . . . . . Page 5**
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# Your Diabetes Care Plan

**It's important to proactively manage your diabetes. Don't wait until you think something is wrong.**

Talk to your doctor about the tests listed in the chart below and create a care plan. These important screenings can help with early detection or prevention of serious conditions like blindness, heart disease, kidney failure, nerve damage and stroke.

	Frequency	Goal	
Test	<b>Blood Glucose Test</b>	Every day or as directed by your doctor	Discuss your target level with your doctor
	<b>Blood Pressure Screening</b>	Every office visit; discuss at telehealth visits	Less than 130/80 mmHg
	<b>A1C Blood Test</b>	Twice a year or as directed by your doctor	Less than 7%
	<b>Foot Exam</b>	Daily self-foot checks; once a year exam with doctor	No injuries or wounds; no numbness or tingling in feet
	<b>Kidney Health Exams</b> <b>Urine Test</b> Measure the amount of protein (albumin-to-creatinine) in urine <b>Blood Test</b> Measure how well your kidneys are filtering (also known as the glomerular filtration rate)	Once each year or as directed by your doctor	Discuss your target levels with your doctor
	<b>Diabetic Eye Exam</b>	Every one to two years, depending on your results	No signs of retinopathy (damage to the blood vessels in the back of the eye)



### **Get the Right Care in an Emergency**

Consider carrying a medical ID at all times, especially if you take insulin. This will help emergency workers if you have a serious episode of high blood glucose or low blood glucose.



### Find Recipe Inspiration with Bravo Wellness

Access hundreds of recipes in your Bravo Wellness program. To find delicious and healthy recipes, log in to My Health Plan at [MedMutual.com/Member](https://www.MedMutual.com/Member) and click Launch Now under Engage with Wellness. Once you are on Bravo Wellness, select Resources from the menu.



# Eat Healthy

**When you have diabetes, it doesn't mean you have to quit eating the foods you enjoy. It's all about balance.**

Take care of yourself by learning what, how much and when to eat. Work with your doctor to create a meal plan based on your routine that incorporates healthy choices and pays special attention to carbohydrates, high-sugar foods, alcohol and medications.

## Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates (carbs) are broken down directly into sugar. This means they have a high glycemic index and can affect your blood glucose more than other food groups. Foods with a high glycemic index (e.g., pretzels, popcorn, white bread), will raise your blood glucose more than foods with a low glycemic index (e.g., salads, grilled chicken, beef or pork, roasted or steamed vegetables, broth-based soups). You can still have carbohydrates, but in moderation. Together with watching your carbs and knowing the glycemic index of the foods you are eating may help you manage your blood glucose levels. An easy way to incorporate carbohydrates into your diet is to choose ones that are high in fiber.

## High-fiber Superfoods

Superfoods refer to a wide variety of foods rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber. Incorporate beans, dark green leafy vegetables like spinach, citrus fruits, berries, nuts, seeds and whole grains into your meals for a balanced diet. Superfoods have a low glycemic index, which means they are digested slowly. Since they're fiber rich, they also slow the absorption of sugar and fat which helps maintain stable blood glucose levels.

## High-sugar Foods

These make your blood glucose levels increase quickly, so make sure to watch how much you eat to avoid high blood glucose. They include high-sugar cereals, sports drinks and foods made with white flour, such as bread and other baked goods.

## Moderate Alcohol

It's important to drink in moderation. If you drink alcohol on an empty stomach, your blood glucose could quickly drop to a dangerous level. Alcohol can also increase your blood fats, increasing your risk for heart disease.

## Medications

You may need to follow a schedule for your meals and snacks based on the different medications you take. The goal is to keep your blood glucose steady and avoid both high and low blood glucose.

## High Blood Glucose (Hyperglycemia)

### Signs and Symptoms

- Needing to go to the bathroom often
- Being thirstier than you normally are
- High glucose readings\*

### Causes

- Eating more than you should
- Not exercising
- Being sick
- Feeling stressed

If you still have hyperglycemia after you start exercising and eating healthier, you might need medication. If you already take medication, your doctor or other healthcare providers may want to adjust how much you take or when you take it.

## Low Blood Glucose (Hypoglycemia)

### Signs and Symptoms

- Blood glucose readings below 70mg/dL\*
- Shakiness, dizziness and headache
- Sweating more than usual
- Feeling hungry
- Seizure
- Pale/pasty/sallow skin color
- Sudden moodiness or behavior changes
- Clumsy or jerky movements
- Difficulty paying attention, or feeling confused or disoriented
- Tingling sensation around the mouth

### Causes

- Too much medication
- Skipping meals
- Eating less than normal
- Exercising more than normal

It's a good idea to keep a supply of snacks on hand at all times. If you feel like your blood glucose is low, follow the 15/15 rule. Eat 15 grams of sugar or carbs and wait 15 minutes. Once the time is up, check your blood glucose. If it's still below 70 mg/dL, have another serving. Repeat these steps as necessary until your blood glucose level is at least 70 mg/dL or your hypoglycemia symptoms resolve. Once your blood glucose is back to normal, eat a meal or snack to make sure it doesn't lower again. Examples of safe, portable foods with 15 grams of sugar or carbs include 3 glucose tablets, a 100% fruit juice box, a small box of raisins or a small cookie.

Low blood glucose can be dangerous. If it becomes seriously low and you cannot swallow, become unconscious, or have a seizure, a glucagon injection can quickly get sugar into your body. Develop an emergency plan and teach your friends, family and coworkers how to safely administer glucagon in case of an emergency. If you're not prepared, it may result in a trip to the emergency room.

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\*Talk to your doctor about your recommended glucose range.







# Get Active

**According to the American Diabetes Association<sup>®</sup>, adults with diabetes should aim for 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, dancing or swimming, at least five days (or a total of 150 minutes) per week.**

Talk with your doctor before beginning a new exercise program. Start slowly and work up to the recommended 30 minutes per day, five days per week. You may want to break up your exercise time into shorter segments of 10 or 15 minutes each.

You should also do some form of resistance training at least two times per week. Resistance training includes exercises using opposing force such as lifting dumbbells, using rubber exercise tubing or your own body weight, for example, push-ups, crunches or squats. Regular exercise helps you:

- Control your blood glucose
- Lower your risk of heart disease
- Get to or maintain a healthy weight
- Improve your overall well-being

Depending on your type of workout, you may need more carbs or a protein snack before exercising to prevent your blood glucose from dropping too low.

Before you begin an exercise program, be sure to talk to your doctor about:

- What kinds of exercise you should do
- If you need a certain kind of snack before or after your workout
- What kinds of limits you have

## Explore Fitness Challenges on Bravo

Access hundreds of fitness challenges for all skill levels in your Bravo Wellness program. To get started today, log in to My Health Plan at [MedMutual.com/Member](https://www.MedMutual.com/Member) and click Launch Now under Engage with Wellness. Once you are on Bravo Wellness, select Resources from the menu.



# Take Care of Your Body

It's about more than just food and exercise.

## Take Care of Your Mind

Studies have shown people with diabetes may be at greater risk for developing depression. This could be due to the stress of managing the condition, feeling separated from family or friends when needing to eat differently or facing additional health issues.

If you feel any symptoms of depression, such as losing interest in activities you used to enjoy, changing sleep patterns or trouble concentrating, talk to your doctor. They can help determine if there is a physical reason for these symptoms (e.g., your blood glucose is not well controlled) and refer you to a specialist, if needed.

## Take Care of Your Eyes

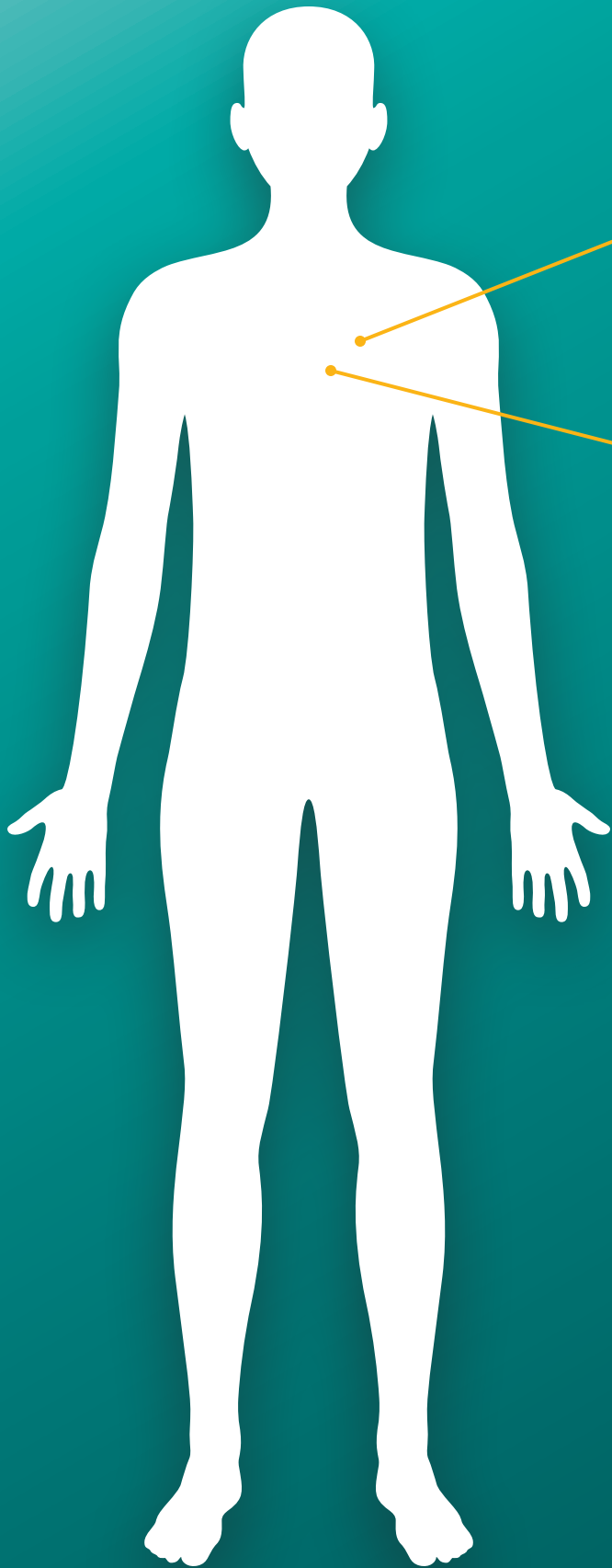
Most people with diabetes only experience minor issues with their eyes, but some people can have serious issues, leading to blindness. Regular eye checkups are important to avoid this.

Serious damage can happen to your retina before you realize it, so it's better to find signs of it early. Visit an ophthalmologist or optometrist (eye doctors) for a diabetic eye exam every year or as directed by your doctor, even if you don't notice any changes to your vision. Your eye doctor may use drops to dilate your pupils to look for signs of retinopathy (damage to blood vessels in your eye).

## Take Care of Your Mouth

People who have diabetes are more likely to develop dental issues, including gum disease, when their blood glucose is not well controlled.

The most severe form of gum disease is periodontitis. This is when your gums recede from your teeth, which may cause teeth to loosen or fall out. Other dental conditions include gingivitis, thrush (a fungal infection) and dry mouth, which can cause cavities, infections and ulcers. To help prevent these issues, be sure to brush and floss your teeth every day and visit your dentist for regular checkups.



## Avoid Tobacco

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tobacco causes harm to nearly every organ in your body. If you have diabetes, it's even more important to stop using tobacco (or never start) because it increases your risk for complications.

All forms of tobacco may make your body more resistant to insulin. This leads to higher blood glucose levels, which can cause problems with your kidneys, heart and blood vessels, including those in your eyes.

### Quitline

Tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. Medical Mutual has resources to help you quit. Call our Quitline at 1-866-845-7702 (TTY:711 for hearing impaired). Representatives are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help you start living tobacco-free. You will receive support from a Quit Coach, as well as a supply of nicotine-replacement therapy at no cost to you.

## Take Care of Your Heart

People who have diabetes are twice as likely to have heart disease or a stroke than people who do not have diabetes. This is because they are more likely to have conditions that damage their blood vessels, increasing risk of developing heart disease. Conditions that can damage blood vessels include:

- High blood glucose (keep your A1C below 7%)<sup>1</sup>
- High blood pressure (keep it below 130/80)<sup>1</sup>
- High cholesterol and/or high triglycerides (hyperlipidemia)<sup>1</sup>

Other factors that can contribute to heart disease include being overweight, not getting enough physical activity and using tobacco.

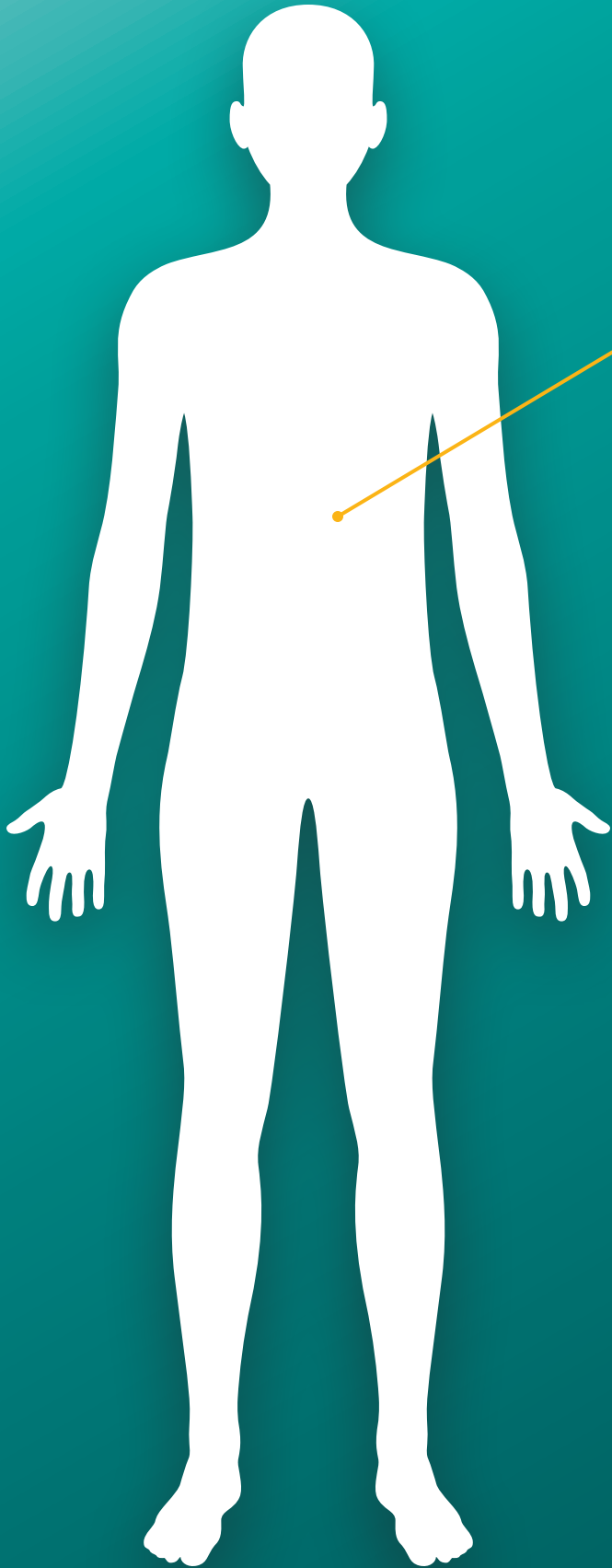
### Maintain Your Heart Health with Statins

If you are not already taking a statin, talk to your doctor about adding this medication to your therapy. Statins may help decrease your cholesterol levels and reduce your risk for cardiovascular diseases.

If you are already taking statins, eating a heart-healthy diet, maintaining a regular exercise routine, not smoking and losing weight can improve how they work<sup>2</sup>

1 Your doctor may have other goals for you based on your current health and risk factors.

2 Statins may cause side effects such as muscle pain or a slight increase in blood glucose. Talk to your doctor to see if a change of dosage or even a different statin might be helpful. Do not simply stop taking your medication.



## Take Your Medications Correctly

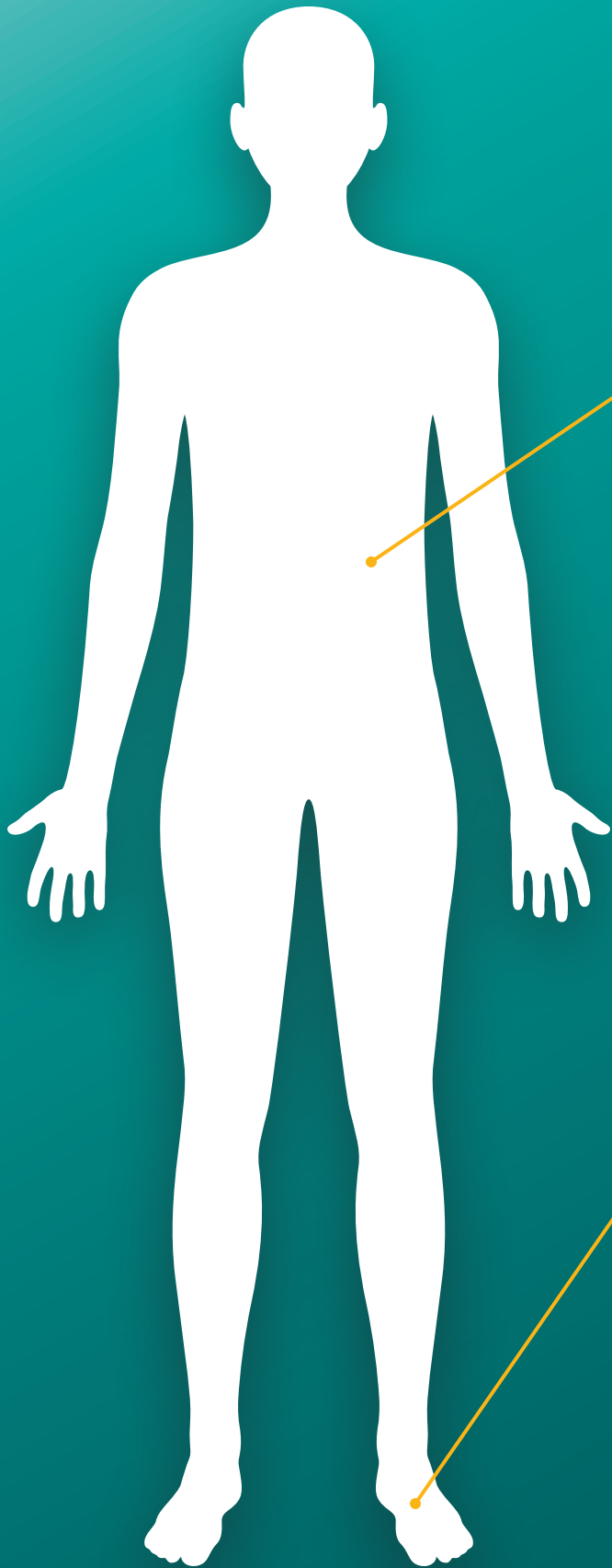
Not taking your medications correctly could lead to serious health issues, including damage to your heart, blood vessels, nerves and kidneys because your blood glucose is not controlled. To prevent these problems, try the following steps:

- Understand what each of your medications is for and how and when to take it. Not all diabetes medications do the same thing. Keep track of everything with a personalized list, like the one available at **MedMutual.com/MedicationList**.
- Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor. Talk to your doctor ahead of time so you know what to do if you forget a dose. If you think you might forget, leave reminders around your house, use a pill organizer or set a routine.
- Don't stop taking a medication until you talk to your doctor or pharmacist. If you have side effects, there will likely be another option available for you to try.
- Develop a plan with your doctor for the times you may become sick so you will know how to adjust your medications, if needed.
- Keep a diabetes preparedness kit in your car and home in case of emergency. It should include water, a source of carbohydrates to treat hypoglycemia (listed on page 6) glucagon and a supply of your medications.

You may need to visit your doctor several times after you start taking your medication to ensure you have a plan to gain better control of your diabetes. Routine visits with your doctor are essential to helping you take control of your diabetes.

Generic versions of your medication may be available at a lower cost. Some drug manufacturers also offer coupons or other financial assistance for their brand-name medications. Your doctor or pharmacist can help you decide what is best for you.





## Take Care of Your Kidneys

People who have diabetes are at greater risk of developing kidney disease (nephropathy). Your kidneys clean your blood and if they become damaged, you'll retain more water and salt in your body than you should.

Your doctor should evaluate your kidneys once a year. This consists of a urine and blood test. Too much protein in your urine can be an early sign of kidney problems. Over time, a build-up of waste products in your blood may lead to kidney failure, called end stage renal disease. People with this condition frequently require dialysis or a kidney transplant.

Keeping your blood glucose and blood pressure under control will help lower your risk of kidney disease.

## Take Care of Your Feet

Diabetes can cause numbness in your feet and you may not feel injuries or developing sores, ulcers or infections. Make sure you have shoes that fit correctly and avoid walking barefoot. Check your feet for red spots, cuts or sores every day and report any concerns to your doctor immediately. If you cannot see your feet properly, use a mirror or ask a family member to inspect your feet for you.

Have a complete foot examination once a year by your doctor. If you have reduced feeling in your feet, foot deformities or foot ulcers, ask your doctor to check your feet at each visit.

# Medical Terms You Should Know

**Being familiar with the following terms is an important part of managing your diabetes.**

## **A1C Blood Test**

An A1C blood test is commonly used to diagnose diabetes and measures how well you are managing it. The A1C test shows your average blood glucose levels over the past three months.

## **Blood Glucose**

The amount of sugar in your blood at a specific time.

## **Diabetes**

A chronic condition in which the body has higher than normal levels of blood glucose.

## **Hyperglycemia**

High blood glucose.

## **Hypoglycemia**

Low blood glucose.

## **Glycemic Index**

The number that tells you how fast your body converts the carbohydrates you eat into sugar. The smaller the number, the less impact the food has on your blood glucose. High glycemic index levels can cause blood glucose to rapidly rise and fall.

## **Nephropathy**

Diabetic nephropathy is kidney damage caused by diabetes.

## **Retinopathy**

Disease of the retina caused by damage to the blood vessels in the back of the eye.

# Additional Support

**To help you learn more about diabetes and how you can manage it, we recommend the following additional resources:**

## **Your Diabetes Care Team**

Your primary care provider or endocrinologist can be your best resource for information about diabetes and how it affects you personally. Your doctors know you best, including your health history, other conditions you have, how those will be affected by your diabetes and what medications you are taking. In addition, your doctor can help coordinate your care with other doctors and specialists and direct you to available resources in your community.

## **Chronic Condition Management Program**

Medical Mutual provides a Chronic Condition Management program at no additional cost with digital and telephonic options. If eligible, you also have the flexibility to participate at times that best meet your needs.

This program supports the care you receive from your doctors. If you choose to participate, you can take advantage of digital and telephonic health coaching and receive diabetes testing supplies with no cost sharing. To see if your plan includes this service, call 1-800-590-2583 (TTY: 711 for hearing impaired) Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Medical Mutual may also reach out to you if we think you could benefit from this program to provide information on how to get started.

## **Bravo Wellness**

Bravo Wellness is included with your Medical Mutual plan. Access healthy recipes, online health courses, mindfulness activities and other resources to help you strengthen your ability to self-manage your condition. Explore Bravo by logging in to My Health Plan at **MedMutual.com/Member**, selecting Healthy Living, then Wellness Portal.

## Lark Diabetes Digital Health Coaching

Lark is a free personal digital coach, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This program uses a complimentary digital scale, a wireless glucometer and an A1C test kit to sync to your smartphone. A digital health coach is available whenever you need it. Lark digital health coaching is available with many Medical Mutual plans. To see if you qualify, call 1-800-590-2583 (TTY: 711 for hearing impaired) to speak with our chronic condition management team.

## American Diabetes Association

Visit the American Diabetes Association at **Diabetes.org** for more information about any of the topics in this Resource Guide. If you have type 2 diabetes, you can also enroll in Living With Type 2 Diabetes, a free 12-month program. You will receive five informational packets, a monthly e-newsletter and more. Visit **Diabetes.org** and click Diabetes, then Newly Diagnosed. To sign up by phone, call 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383) (TTY:711 for hearing impaired).

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Sources:

[Diabetes.org](https://diabetes.org); [Diabetes.NIDDK.NIH.gov](https://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov); [CDC.gov](https://cdc.gov)

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