



Diabetes and heart disease/stroke

People with diabetes are 3 to 4 times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease (including heart attack and stroke) than those who do not have diabetes. This is due to raised blood glucose levels (BGLs), in association with high blood pressure and cholesterol.

People with diabetes tend to have more dense LDL (bad) cholesterol particles than those without diabetes. The denser LDL is more likely to cause blockage of the blood vessels. Over time, if there is a build-up of fatty material on the blood vessel walls (called atherosclerosis) blood flow will be restricted. This may lead to blockage of the major vessels supplying blood to the heart and brain, causing a heart attack or stroke.

What is the risk of this happening to me?

Around 75% of people with diabetes die from cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke.

People with diabetes are up to six times more likely to suffer from atherosclerosis than people without diabetes.

People who have pre-diabetes also have an increased risk of heart disease. Pre-diabetes (impaired glucose tolerance [IGT] or impaired fasting glucose [IFG]) is a condition where blood glucose levels are elevated above normal but have not yet reached the levels at which diabetes would be diagnosed.

How can I reduce my risk of heart disease? If you have diabetes, the following can help reduce your risk of developing heart disease:

Be physically active Regular physical activity combined with weight loss can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes, reduce blood pressure and help to reduce the risk of a heart attack and stroke. It is likely that any type of physical activity of equivalent intensity and duration – whether sports, household work, gardening or work-related physical activity – will help. Aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. Moderate intensity is when your breathing increases noticeably – a ‘little bit of puff’. If you have had diabetes for some years or have been physically inactive for a while, check with your doctor before beginning a physical activity program.

If you are overweight, try to lose weight Being overweight, especially around the middle, is a major risk factor for heart disease, and is strongly linked to type 2 diabetes. Even a 5% weight loss (eg a loss of 5kg in a 100kg person) reduces the risk of heart disease.

Don't smoke Smoking is a very important risk factor for sudden cardiac death, and smokers have double the risk of heart disease compared with non-smokers. Stopping smoking can be a difficult task however there are many programs to help you. Call Quitline on 137 848 and also talk to your doctor about other available options.

Keep blood fats at target levels Problems with the levels of fats in the blood frequently occur in people with type 2 diabetes. Usually in people with diabetes there are more or higher LDL (bad) cholesterol particles that are stickier and are more likely to cause a blockage. In addition, there are usually low levels of HDL (good or protective) cholesterol, and high levels of triglycerides in the blood. Statins (tablets for high cholesterol) have been shown to control blood fats and are important in reducing the risk of heart disease.

Manage high blood pressure High blood pressure is common in people with diabetes. For people with high blood pressure and diabetes, the risk of heart disease more than doubles and is greater than when either condition is present alone. Maintaining fitness with regular physical activity combined with some weight loss can help reduce high blood pressure. Blood pressure lowering medications, often in combination, are frequently required.

**For more information contact our
Customer Care Line on 1300 136 588**