



**FACT SHEET:**

# Your diabetes annual cycle of care

The diabetes annual cycle of care is a checklist for reviewing your diabetes management and general health each year. Your doctor will do this review to help you, and your diabetes health professionals manage your diabetes, and your risk of diabetes-related complications.

It is essential to do an annual cycle of care to find any health problems early. If there are early signs of health problems, you can discuss the best possible treatment with your doctor and diabetes health professionals. Without regular checks, diabetes can lead to health problems that can affect your whole body, including your kidneys, eyes, feet, nerves and heart.

The annual cycle of care includes the following health checks.

## **HbA1c**

This blood test reflects your average blood glucose level over the last 10-12 weeks. This should be done at least every 6-12 months, or more often if you have changed your diabetes management, started a new diabetes medication or have difficulties achieving your blood glucose targets. The general recommendation is to aim for a reading of 53 mmol/mol (7%) or less. HbA1c targets can be different for different groups of people. So, it is important to discuss your

HbA1c target with your doctor, diabetes nurse practitioner or diabetes educator.

## **Blood pressure**

Ask your general practitioner (GP) or practice nurse to check your blood pressure at every visit or at least every six months. As a general guide, the target for people with diabetes is 130/80 to 140/90, or less. Research shows that keeping blood pressure in the target range reduces the risk of diabetes-related complications such as stroke, heart, kidney and eye disease, and nerve damage. Your doctor will advise you on a blood pressure target to meet your individual health needs.

## **Foot checks**

Your GP, diabetes educator, diabetes nurse practitioner, practice nurse or podiatrist will check your feet to assess blood supply and sensation at least every year. Together, this will determine your risk of developing diabetes-related foot problems.

Have extra foot checks:

- every 3-6 months if you have **moderate-risk** feet
- at least every 1-3 months if you have **high-risk** feet.

Daily foot care is essential. Get to know your feet and check them every day. Use a mirror or have someone look at them for you if you cannot reach your feet. See your GP or a podiatrist if you notice any changes in your feet.

For more information about looking after your feet, talk to your GP, podiatrist, or diabetes educator. Ask your GP if you are eligible for a GP management plan so you can get a Medicare rebate to see a podiatrist.

## Eye checks

Damage to the small vessels in the back of your eyes can occur even without you knowing. That is why it is very important to have your eyes checked regularly by an optometrist or eye specialist (ophthalmologist) for diabetes-related damage. This is recommended at least every two years or more often. Your doctor will advise how often you need to have an eye check.

Contact your optometrist or eye specialist as soon as possible if you notice any changes in your vision.

## Kidney health

Having high blood pressure and blood glucose levels above target for long periods of time can increase the risk of damage to your kidneys. Every 12 months your GP or diabetes specialist (endocrinologist) will arrange a urine test to check for protein in your urine (albuminuria). A blood test to check your kidney function is also recommended.

## Blood fats

Healthy blood fats (cholesterol and triglyceride) levels reduce your risk of diabetes-related complications.

Your doctor will order a blood test to check that your blood fats are in the target range:

- total cholesterol of less than 4 mmol/L
- LDL cholesterol (low density lipoprotein also known as bad cholesterol) of less than 2 mmol/L
- HDL cholesterol (high density lipoprotein also known as good cholesterol) of 1 mmol/L or higher
- triglycerides of less than 2 mmol/L.

These targets may change according to your type of diabetes, age and other personal factors. Your doctor will advise you on the target ranges for blood fats that meet your individual health needs.

## Weight, waist and body mass index

If you are carrying extra weight, losing even a small amount of weight (5-10%) reduces your blood pressure, blood glucose levels and cholesterol.

Using the Body Mass Index (BMI) is one way to assess your weight. This measures whether or not your weight is in the healthy weight range. It is calculated by dividing your weight in kilograms (kg) by your height in metres squared (m<sup>2</sup>). You can also use online calculators to know your BMI. A BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 is within the healthy weight range.

Your waist measurement is an important indicator of your health risks. The general guide for waist measurement is less than 94 cm for men and less than 80 cm for women. These are average targets for people from European backgrounds. Different target ranges may be used if you are from Asian or Pacific Islander backgrounds. Speak to your doctor or diabetes health professional about the BMI and waist targets that are right for you.

## Healthy eating

Following a healthy eating plan will help you achieve the best possible blood glucose and cholesterol levels, and help you manage your weight. Ask your GP if you are eligible for a GP management plan so you can get a Medicare rebate to see a dietitian.

## Physical activity

Be physically active. For good health, aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (such as brisk walking, swimming or cycling) on most, if not all, days of the week. You can also add some light exercise to your daily routine. For example, choose to climb the stairs instead of using the lift, or hang washing outside instead of using the dryer. It is also important to add 2-3 sessions of resistance training a week and to limit your time sitting and being sedentary. The best activity is one that you enjoy and gets you moving.

Before starting any new exercise or activity program, check with your doctor to make sure it is suitable for you. If you are on insulin or other glucose-lowering medications, you may need to take special precautions when exercising to prevent your blood glucose level from dropping too low (also known as hypoglycaemia or hypo). Ask your doctor, diabetes nurse practitioner or diabetes educator if you are at risk of hypos.

Your level of physical activity will be reviewed as part of your annual cycle of care.

An exercise physiologist can develop a program that is right for you. Ask your GP if you are eligible for a GP management plan so you can get a Medicare rebate to see an exercise physiologist.



## Medication review

Your GP will review your medications to ensure that the combination of all your current medications is safe and that the doses are right for you. You may also be eligible for a free Home Medication Review. This involves the pharmacy of your choice doing a thorough review of all your medications in your own home. Ask your GP for more information.

## Diabetes management

Your diabetes educator or diabetes nurse practitioner can review your overall diabetes management and provide advice on how to keep your diabetes on track.

A diabetes educator can help you work out a diabetes management plan that is right for you. Ask your GP if you are eligible for a GP management plan so you can get a Medicare rebate to see a diabetes educator.

## Smoking

If you are a smoker, quitting can help reduce your risk of diabetes-related complications and improve your overall health. Some people find it hard to quit. Ask for help if you feel you cannot give up smoking on your own. Talk to your GP or call the Quitline on [13 78 48](tel:137848).

## Emotional health

Your emotional health is also important. If living with diabetes is making you feel anxious or distressed, discuss how you are feeling with your family, friends and diabetes health professionals. They can help you access the support you need.

## GP management plan

A GP management plan can help you manage your diabetes well. A GP management may also allow you to get a Medicare rebate when seeing some health professionals, such as diabetes educators, dietitians, podiatrists and exercise physiologists. Talk to your GP or practice nurse about having a GP management plan.

### Your annual cycle of care checklist

These times and targets are a general guide for adults. Ask your doctor for the timing of health checks and targets that meet your individual health needs.

Check	When	General Targets	My Goals and Targets
HbA1c	At least every 6-12 months	53 mmol/mol (7%) or less	
Blood pressure	At least every six months	130/80 to 140/90 or less	
Foot assessment	<p><b>Very-low</b> and <b>low-risk</b> feet: At least every year</p> <hr/> <p><b>Moderate-risk:</b> At least every 3-6 months</p> <hr/> <p><b>High-risk</b> feet: At least every 1-3 months</p>	Foot health maintained	
Eye examination	At least every two years	Eye health maintained	
Kidney health	At least every year	<p>Urine albumin levels in target range</p> <hr/> <p>Kidney function test in target range</p>	
Blood fats	At least every year	<p>Total cholesterol less than 4 mmol/L</p> <hr/> <p>LDL less than 2 mmol/L</p> <hr/> <p>HDL 1 mmol/L or above</p> <hr/> <p>Triglycerides less than 2 mmol/L</p>	
Weight	At least every six months	BMI 18.5-24.9	

Check	When	General Targets	My Goals and Targets
Waist circumference*	At least every six months	Less than 94 cm (men) Less than 80 cm (women)	
Healthy eating review	At least every year	Following a healthy eating plan	
Physical activity review	At least every year	At least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, five or more days a week, 2-3 sessions with resistance training and minimise time sitting	
Medication review	At least every year	Safe use of medications	
Smoking	At least every year	No smoking	
Diabetes management	At least every year	Self-management of diabetes maintained	
Emotional health	As needed	Emotional health and well-being maintained	

Note: The targets listed are for adults with diabetes. Different targets apply to children and adolescents.  
\*BMI and waist circumference targets may not apply to non-European ethnic groups.



## More information and support

- Go to [ndss.com.au](https://ndss.com.au) to search for the 'Diabetes-related complications', 'Looking after your heart', 'Looking after your kidneys', 'Looking after your eyes', 'Looking after your feet', 'Looking after your dental health' and other fact sheets.
- Go to [ndss.com.au/annual-cycle-of-care-podcasts/](https://ndss.com.au/annual-cycle-of-care-podcasts/) and listen to the Annual Cycle of Care podcast series.
- Go to [ndss.com.au](https://ndss.com.au) to access the Ready, set, go- Let's move online program and to search for other NDSS programs and services in your state or territory, or online.
- To find out more about looking after your feet, go to [footforward.org.au](https://footforward.org.au).
- Go to [keepsight.org.au](https://keepsight.org.au) to register for the eye check reminder program for people with diabetes.
- Go to [healthdirect.gov.au](https://healthdirect.gov.au) to find diabetes health professionals near you or search for:
  - » a diabetes educator at [adea.com.au](https://adea.com.au)
  - » a dietitian at [dietitiansaustralia.org.au](https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au)
  - » an exercise physiologist at [essa.org.au/find-aep](https://essa.org.au/find-aep).

