

Ten health checks everyone with diabetes should have

Your GP or nurse should conduct regular tests for a variety of different diabetes complications. Many people with diabetes simply don't get the check ups they need, and even if they do the results are often not acted upon. Make sure you get the following checks for good health and to avoid diabetes-related complications.



1

HbA1c level

Have your **HbA1c level** measured at least once a year, although research demonstrates that having your HbA1c checked every 4–6 months will provide you with the best support for maintaining good blood sugar control. Your HbA1c measures your overall blood glucose control but more importantly provides information about your risk of having a heart attack or a stroke within the next year. Be sure to ask your diabetes healthcare team what your optimal HbA1c target should be over the next 12 months.

2

Blood pressure

Get your **blood pressure** measured and recorded annually. Ask your healthcare team what your blood pressure target is (achieving this will minimise your cardiovascular risk) and ask for advice on how to achieve it.

3

Cholesterol

Measure your **cholesterol** (blood fats) once a year. Again ask for your own target that is realistic and achievable.

4

Eye screen

Ask for an **eye screen** for signs of retinopathy every two years. The specialist will check your eyes for any diabetes-related damage to your retina.

5

Feet check

Have your **feet checked** annually. Make sure they check the skin, circulation and sensation of your feet for signs of any damage.

6

Kidney function

Have your **kidney function** measured every year. You should have both a urine test for protein and a blood test to measure kidney function.

7

Weight check

Get your **weight checked** and ask them to measure your waist to see if you need to lose weight. You can ask for a Green Prescription to access a free and supported exercise programme in your area.

8

Heart check

Having high blood sugar levels causes damage to blood vessels putting you at high risk for heart disease. Ask your GP or practice nurse to complete a **cardiovascular risk assessment** so that you understand your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Also ask them to review how you can change your lifestyle or medication so that you can reduce your risk.

9

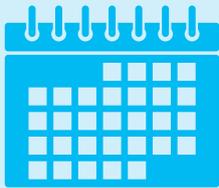
Quit smoking

Smoking contributes to cardiovascular risk. Ask your health team what **local support programmes** are available for helping you to quit.

10

Teeth check

Get your **teeth cleaned** by a dentist or dental hygienist regularly, as people with diabetes are more at risk of gum disease. Also, having gum disease raises your blood sugar level.



Diary regular check ups with your health care team so you can discuss any issues you have with your diabetes, medication or health in general. If you feel able, it's good to share personal information with your doctor or diabetes nurse, including how you are feeling.

Reviewed by Dr Janet Titchener, Clinical Director, GPSI Diabetes, with rooms in St Heliers, Auckland and Havelock North, Hawkes Bay.

Diabetes New Zealand is a leading national organisation and registered charity. Our aim is to support all people affected by diabetes to live well through: Providing information and support to help people take charge of their health • Acting as an advocate and representing all people with, or at risk of developing, diabetes • Raising awareness of diabetes, especially around lifestyle factors that can help prevent or delay type 2 and help manage and control type 1 and type 2.

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