

DiabetesSisters is honored to work with a wide variety of organizations, companies, institutions, health systems, government agencies, diabetes bloggers, and online communities serving people with diabetes in order to reach more women with diabetes with our messages of healthy living and positive peer support. We are grateful for the support of the organizations that have supported the creation and distribution of this brochure.

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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS



No Woman Should Walk Her Diabetes Journey Alone

More than 15 million women in the U.S. and 181 million women worldwide currently live with diabetes. They face unique challenges every day such as fluctuating blood sugars due to pregnancy, menses, and menopause. For reasons not fully understood, women with diabetes also face increased health risks, including heart disease, depression, eating disorders, osteoporosis, and ketoacidosis. They also report higher levels of loneliness and isolation.



Our Mission

To improve the health and quality of life of women with, and at risk for, diabetes and to advocate on their behalf.

Our Vision

A world where women are fully empowered to effectively manage their diabetes.

DiabetesSisters

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HEART HEALTH



**WOMEN
DIABETES
LIFE**

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What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition characterized by hyperglycemia (high blood sugar), resulting in the body's inability to properly use blood glucose or produce insulin. The two subgroups of people with diabetes that have the greatest cardiovascular risk are type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes – the pancreas no longer makes insulin and therefore blood glucose cannot enter the cells to be used for energy. Individuals with type 1 diabetes require insulin for survival. The cause of type 1 diabetes is unknown but the occurrence is greater if one of the parents or siblings also has type 1 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes – either the pancreas does not make enough insulin or the body is unable to use insulin correctly. Individuals with type 2 diabetes can manage the disease with a variety of treatments, including medication, diet, and exercise. The causes of type 2 diabetes include various factors, such as family history of type 2 diabetes, age, physical inactivity, excess weight, gestational diabetes, and race/ethnicity.

Women with either type 1 diabetes or type 2 diabetes are at particularly high risk for cardiovascular disease.

What is Cardiovascular Disease?

Cardiovascular disease develops when a substance called plaque builds up on the walls of the arteries. Plaque buildup creates a partial clog of the arteries that makes it harder for blood to flow through them. Plaque also makes it more likely for a blood clot to form and stop the blood flow entirely. Some examples of cardiovascular disease include:

- **Heart attack** – clot that stops blood flow to part of the heart
- **Angina** – partially clogged arteries that cause chest pain with activity that resolves with rest
- **History of cardiac bypass surgery** to bypass clogged arteries of the heart
- **Ischemic Stroke** – clot that stops blood flow to part of the brain
- **Mini-stroke or Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)** – clot that temporarily stops blood flow to part of the brain

- **Aneurysm** – partially clogged artery that leads to risk of rupture and bleeding
- **Peripheral artery disease** - Blockage in arteries of a leg that may cause leg pain with activity. This condition is associated with heart attacks and strokes.

Top things that women with diabetes need to know about cardiovascular disease:

1. Diabetes increases the risk of experiencing cardiovascular disease.

Women with diabetes may have heart attacks and strokes up to 20-30 years earlier than women without diabetes. Following certain behaviors and lifestyle changes can reduce that risk.

2. Healthier habits prevent heart disease.

The American Heart Association suggests these simple habits to help prevent cardiovascular disease:

- **Get active** - walk briskly or do other physical activities for at least 30 minutes daily. Ten minutes 3 times daily is just as effective as 30 minutes at one time.
- **Balance food choices and increase vegetable intake.** Try making half your plate vegetables. When eating fruit, choose small portions to bolster vitamins and fiber while limiting high blood sugar. Try the "Create Your Plate" tool at www.diabetes.org.
- **Quit smoking.** You can do it! Get help by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW or go to www.women.smokefree.org.
- For some women, **reducing body weight by 5-10 lbs.** and maintaining that weight loss may improve blood pressure and blood sugars.



3. Know your Heart Health ABCs and discuss them with your doctor.

Heart Health ABCs	Prevention NO prior history of cardiovascular disease	Treatment PRIOR HISTORY of cardiovascular disease
Aspirin Is it right for me?	It depends on other risk factors. Ask your doctor if aspirin is appropriate preventive treatment.	Aspirin 81 mg daily is the typical recommended dose. Discuss with your doctor if you are not taking aspirin.
Blood Pressure What is my goal?	Less than 140/90 mm Hg*	Less than 140/90 mm Hg*
Cholesterol What about statin [†] medications?	Recommended for women with diabetes age 40 and older	Recommended for all women with a prior history of cardiovascular disease

*Some guidelines recommend blood pressure goals less than 150/90 mm Hg for adults aged 60 years and older.

†Statin medications include simvastatin, atorvastatin, pravastatin, ceruvastatin, and others.

Resources

American Diabetes Association: www.diabetes.org
American Heart Association: www.heart.org
Center for Women's Health Research: www.cwhr.org
DiabetesSisters: www.diabetessisters.org
Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: www.health.gov/paguidelines/
Smokefree Women: www.women.smokefree.gov/

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