More than 90,000 Nova Scotians have diabetes! This number will continue to increase in the years to come.

When it comes to complications, it doesn’t matter what type of diabetes you have. Whether you are treated with lifestyle only (diet and exercise), insulin or diabetes pills, the complications of diabetes can occur and be very upsetting.

In people with diabetes, more than 65 to 80% of deaths are due to heart disease. This is two to four times that of people without diabetes.

The risk of heart disease is great for both men and women with diabetes. However, women with diabetes are at a much greater risk than women without diabetes.

Prevention Tips:
1. Take very good care of your diabetes. This includes your blood pressure, blood glucose, and blood fats (lipids). Talk to your doctor, the staff of your local Diabetes Centre, and your pharmacist to find out what’s new and how YOU can best manage your diabetes. You can make a difference!
• Aim for good blood glucose control. Check your blood glucose as directed by your health care team. Use these results to better manage your diabetes. Newer insulin and pills for managing diabetes now make it easier to find the best treatment for controlling blood glucose.
• Aim for very good blood pressure control.
• Correct any blood fat (lipid) problems. Pills may be needed to obtain good values.
• Learn the names of the tests you should have done routinely, the target values, and how your results compare (see the back page).

Am I at risk for heart disease? Risk factors include:
- Diabetes (any type)
- Smoking
- Inactivity/sedentary lifestyle
- Excess body weight
- High blood pressure
- Excessive alcohol intake
- High blood glucose (the higher the sugar, the higher the risk)
- High blood fats such as high cholesterol
- Men 45 years or older
- Women over age 55 or postmenopausal
- A family history of heart disease before age 55
- First Nations people and those of African or South Asian descent

Developed by:
Partnerships, Quality, and Innovation (since 1991)

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Prevention Tips (cont’d):

2. **If you smoke, quit! If you don’t smoke, don’t start!**
   This may be the single most important risk factor for heart disease. Talk to your local health care provider about resources in your community to help you quit starting a new exercise program, check with your doctor.

3. **Learn about other factors that you can change such as healthy eating, active living, and weight management.**
   - **Eat healthy.** Include a variety of vegetables, fruit and whole grains. Eat foods high in fibre such as whole grain and whole wheat products. Decrease your intake of fat, salt, and alcohol. Try skim to 1% milk and cheeses; limit your use of sauces, gravies, and added margarine and/or butter.
   - **Keep active and make exercise part of your day.** Physical activity improves blood glucose, blood fats, blood pressure, and helps control weight. The benefits of physical activity can come from short periods of exercise throughout the day. Start with 5 to 10 minutes and gradually increase. Walking and resistance exercises can be very beneficial. It is important to find an activity you enjoy. Before starting a new exercise program, check with your doctor.
   - **If overweight, try to lose.** Even a small weight loss can make a big difference. Being overweight makes diabetes management more difficult and tends to make high blood pressure and high blood fats worse. Set realistic weight loss goals. A dietitian can help you with a weight loss plan, taking into account your usual eating habits.

4. **Don’t wait for the signs of a heart attack to appear.** Make sure you see your doctor for regular assessments and tests. **Act early on any problems.**

5. **If you are stressed or depressed, seek help.** Improving your mood may make it easier to follow the best diabetes management and to reduce your risks.

6. **Drinking too much alcohol** can increase your blood pressure, blood fats and increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. Have alcohol-free gatherings, set limits for your alcohol intake and stick to them.

- **Remember, family members of people with diabetes are at increased risk for developing diabetes and heart disease.** Regular screening for diabetes is recommended.

- **Learn as much as you can about your disease. Take an active role in your diabetes care. **Remember, be Heart Smart™!

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### I have diabetes, what should my values be?

- **Glycated Hemoglobin (AIC) (for most people) .......................................................... under 7%**
  (This test shows how well your blood glucose control has been over the last 2 to 3 months.)

- **Blood Glucose (sugar)**
  - Blood glucose fasting or before meals .......................................................... 4 to 7 mmol/L
  - Blood glucose 2 hours after meals .......................................................... 5 to 10 mmol/L

- **Blood Pressure (for most people) .......................................................... under 140/80 mmHg**

- **Blood Fats (lipids) – Review your targets with your doctor**
  - Low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) .................................................. 2.0 mmol/L or lower
  - Triglycerides .......................................................... under 1.5 mmol/L
  - Ratio of TC to HDL-C (TC divided by HDL-C) .................................................. under 4.0

Your target values should be determined with your doctor and other members of your healthcare team. Safety in attaining these values is of the greatest importance.