

# Diabetes & You

## Women with Diabetes Are At Higher Risk for Heart Disease and Stroke, But They Can Reduce The Risks

Women are special in many important ways. For instance, a woman is often the person responsible for making the health and lifestyle decisions for her family. Sometimes, she is so busy caring for others that she may neglect her own health.

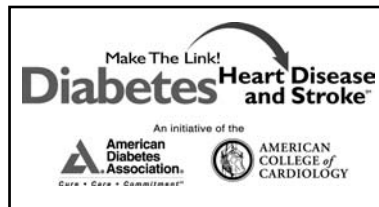
Approximately 9.1 million women in the United States have diabetes, a disease that affects the way the body converts food into energy. The prevalence of diabetes is at least two to four times higher among African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander women than among Caucasian women. Because of the increasing lifespan of women and the rapid growth of minority populations, the number of women in the United States at high risk for diabetes and its complications are increasing.

Women are hit harder by diabetes in a multitude of ways. For instance, women with diabetes are at greater risk for heart disease and stroke compared with men. Forty-five percent of women with diabetes have heart disease, compared to 39 percent of men. What's more, once women develop heart disease they tend to have a poorer outcome than men. After suffering a heart attack, women have a higher risk of dying or having a second heart attack than do men.

Women with diabetes are more likely to have other risk factors for heart disease and stroke than women without diabetes. These risk factors include high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

A new public awareness initiative, "Make the Link! Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke," seeks to increase awareness about the link between diabetes and heart disease and stroke. Make the Link! is a three-year initiative co-sponsored by the American Diabetes Association and the American College of Cardiology.

One way for women with diabetes to "make the link" and



reduce their risk for heart disease and stroke is to know their diabetes ABCs:

- **A** is for the A1C test, the blood test that measures blood glucose (sugar) over the last two to three months.  
–Target range: less than 7 percent
- **B** is for blood pressure  
–Target range: less than 130/80
- **C** is for cholesterol  
–Target range: LDL (bad) cholesterol less than 100 mg/dl

Besides knowing your diabetes ABCs, there are some small changes that a woman with diabetes can make to help lower the risks for developing heart disease.

- Keep blood glucose (blood sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol numbers within your goal range.
- If you smoke, get help to quit
- Be active most days
- Eat low-fat meals that are high in fruits and vegetables, and whole grain foods
- Ask a healthcare provider about taking aspirin and other medicines that can help reduce the chance of having a heart attack or stroke
- Work closely with a healthcare provider to manage diabetes and reduce the risk for heart disease and stroke

Find out more about the ABCs of diabetes by talking to your health care provider, or by visiting [www.diabetes.org/makethelink](http://www.diabetes.org/makethelink) or calling (800) DIABETES (342-2383).

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