

Heart Disease and Diabetes

Heart problems are unfortunately common in people with diabetes. Many conditions that increase your chances of getting heart disease are more common in people with diabetes. These conditions include cholesterol problems, high blood pressure, overweight, and blood clotting problems.

Heart attacks, known in the medical community as “myocardial infarctions,” are one of the most common heart conditions. These occur when the arteries leading to your heart are partially blocked so that blood cannot flow as well as it should to your heart. When your heart muscles don’t get enough oxygen-carrying blood, they begin to die.

Silence Is Deadly

For most people, not getting enough blood to the heart leads to symptoms such as chest pain or pressure, jaw pain, arm pain, shortness of breath, sweating, and pounding heartbeat. However, many

people with diabetes and heart disease do not notice any symptoms at all. Medical care providers call this condition “silent ischemia.”

Silent ischemia is very dangerous because it may prevent patients with heart problems from seeking medical care and getting early treatment.

Testing Is Key

If your care provider suspects that you may have heart problems, cardiac stress tests and a variety of other tests can be done to assess your heart’s functioning. Contact your health care provider to discuss possible stress testing if:

- You have new or unusual symptoms of shortness of breath, tiring easily, or discomfort in your chest, jaw, or arms that starts with stress or physical activity and is relieved by rest.
- You have had problems with arteries that deliver blood to other parts of your body, such as your legs or neck.

- You are about to start an exercise program in which you will be much more physically active than you have been.
- At least two of the following apply to you: you have a close family member with heart disease, a history of smoking, abnormal or high cholesterol levels, or high blood pressure.

More than three-fourths of all people with diabetes eventually die from a heart attack or stroke. Controlling your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose and taking aspirin can lower your risk. Finding out early and getting treatment quickly can save your life.

