

Understanding Diabetes Complications

Two main types of complications that can occur are:

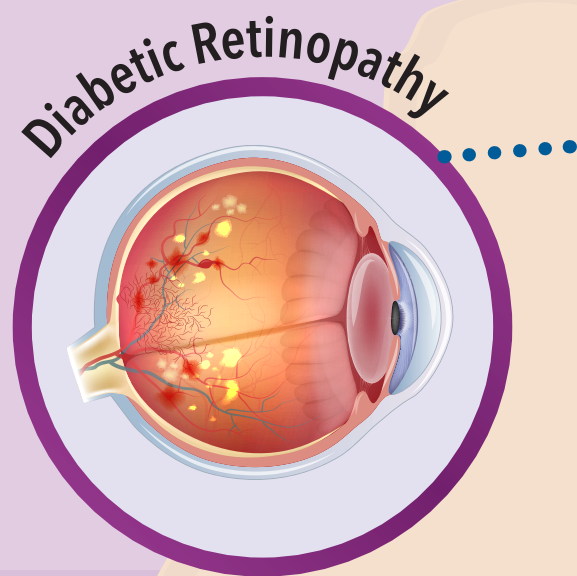


Microvascular (Small blood vessels)

Eye Problems

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness among adults in the U.S. For this reason, an annual eye exam is critical for people with diabetes so that your doctor can check for signs of glaucoma, cataracts, or problems with the retina (retinopathy).

Retinopathy affects the back part of the eye, called the retina. This is where the eye receives images and converts them to electrical signals, which travel to the brain along the optic nerve. Diabetes is a major cause of retinopathy. More than 80% of people who have had diabetes 20 years or longer get diabetic retinopathy.

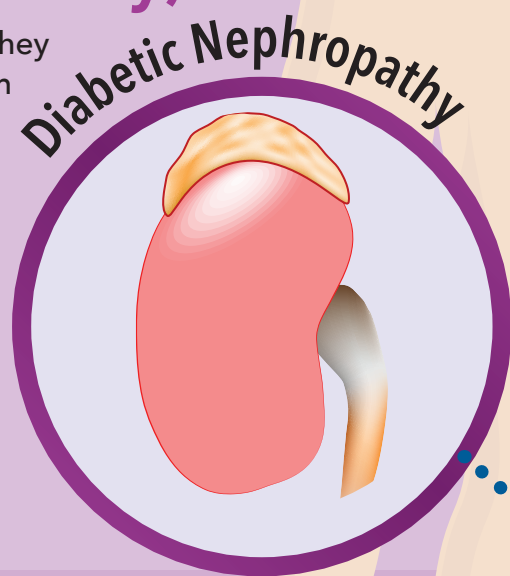


Kidney Disease (Nephropathy)

Your kidneys are very important for your overall health. They remove waste and excess water from your body, maintain your body's chemical balance, and produce hormones that regulate the creation of red blood cells and blood pressure. They also contribute to bone health.

The body has two kidneys. You need at least one to work in order to survive.

Diabetes is the most common cause of kidney disease in the U.S. Among U.S. adults age 20 or older with diagnosed diabetes, 36.5% have chronic kidney disease.



Neuropathy

About 50 percent of people with diabetes get some form of neuropathy. But not everyone has symptoms.

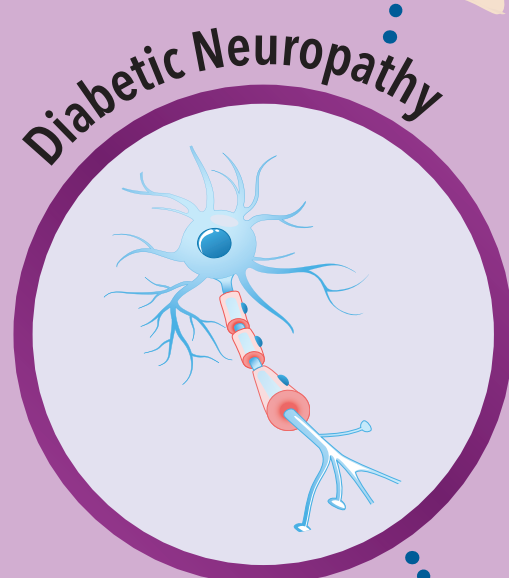
Those who develop neuropathy get one of two types: one that affects the limbs (distal polyneuropathy, or DPN), and the other that affects some of the internal organs (autonomic neuropathy).

DPN's symptoms can include:

- Pain, tingling, and burning
- Numbness or loss of feeling
- Muscle weakness
- Open sores (skin ulcers)

Autonomic neuropathy's symptoms can include:

- Bladder problems
- Digestive system problems
- Sexual problems
- Too much or too little sweating
- Dizziness when you stand up



Macrovascular (Large blood vessels)

Cardiovascular Disease

Heart disease, peripheral arterial disease, and stroke are major concerns for people with diabetes. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of Americans, and people with diabetes are twice as likely to have a heart attack or stroke as are people without diabetes. Two out of three people with diabetes die from cardiovascular disease.

The risk factors for cardiovascular disease include:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Abnormal blood fat (cholesterol and triglycerides) levels
- Overweight or obesity
- Lack of physical activity
- Over the age of 50
- Personal or family history of cardiovascular disease

Coronary Heart Disease

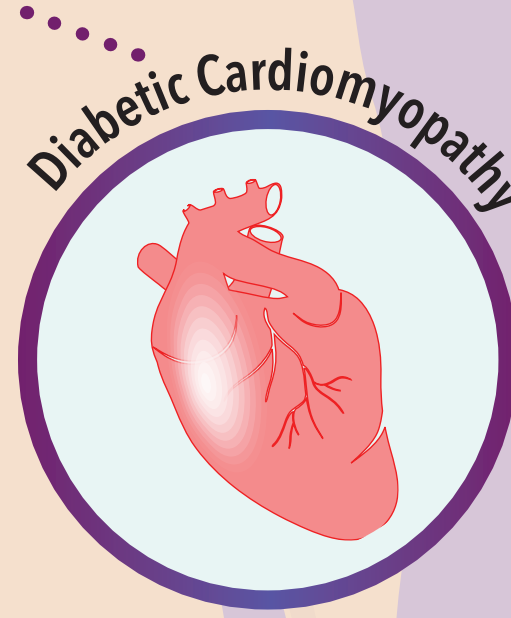
If your body has too much of certain blood fats, they can build up inside the arteries that carry blood to the heart. This buildup, called atherosclerosis, can lead to coronary heart disease, the narrowing or blockage of these important blood vessels.

Heart Attack

If oxygen or blood supply is blocked or cut off to your heart, a heart attack may be the result.

Heart Failure

Heart failure means your heart can't pump all the blood your body needs. A heart attack, coronary artery disease, and high blood pressure (hypertension) can all bring on heart failure.

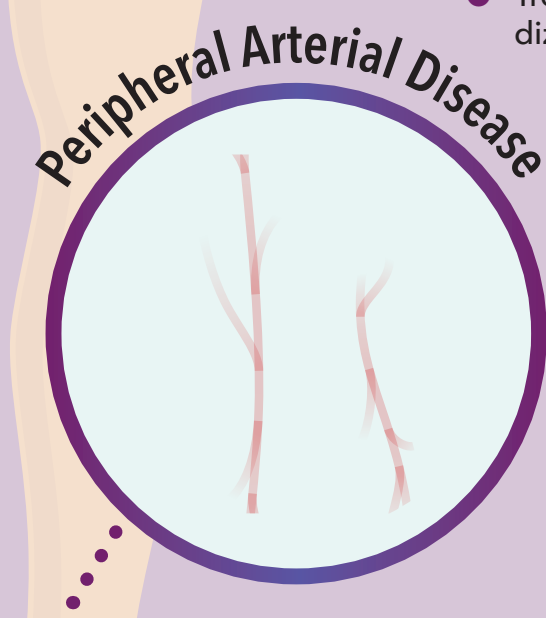


Stroke

A stroke is like a "brain attack"—the blood supply to part of your brain is suddenly stopped, usually by a blockage or blood clot. People with diabetes are 1½ times more likely to have a stroke than are people who don't have diabetes.

The warning signs for stroke are:

- Weakness or numbness on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding
- Trouble talking or walking, dizziness, loss of balance
- Trouble seeing out of one or both eyes
- Double vision
- Severe headache



Peripheral Arterial Disease

When the arteries in your legs become clogged with the buildup of blood fats, peripheral arterial disease (PAD) may be the result. It's estimated that one out of every three people over the age of 50 who have diabetes also have PAD.

The symptoms of PAD are:

- Leg pain, especially after walking or exercising (which goes away after a few minutes of rest)
- Numbness, tingling, or coldness in the lower legs or feet
- Slowly healing sores or infections on your feet or legs

Prevention and Treatment

It's important to understand that complications don't always happen. If you keep your blood sugar in the range your doctor recommends, you can reduce your chances of getting complications.



Control Blood Sugar



Healthy Eating



Physical Activity



Maintaining a Healthy Weight



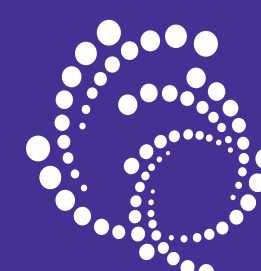
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