Checking your feet is important. When you have diabetes, the nerve endings and blood vessels in your feet can get damaged. When this happens, your feet may feel numb and you may not be able to feel pain the way you used to. You may not notice when your shoes are causing a blister or a callus. You may not feel cuts or other foot injuries. Diabetes also makes it harder for your body to fight infection and heal a wound. So what starts as a simple cut or blister could become a big problem.

So it’s a good habit to check your feet every day. Give every part of your foot a close look.

Here’s what to look for:

» Signs of a wound not healing or signs of an infection, like redness, oozing, warmth, or swelling, or having a large sore. Don’t try to treat these things yourself. Call your doctor today.

» Tingling or numbness in your feet. This could be caused by nerve damage. If this happens, make an appointment with your doctor as soon as you can.

» Corns or calluses. Don’t cut them, file them down, or do anything that may break the skin. Just leave them alone until the next time you see your doctor.

» Blisters or broken skin. Never pop a blister. And treat any little cut or scratch with care. As long as it’s not getting worse or doesn’t get infected, you can tell your doctor about it at your next visit.

Protect Your Feet

1. Check your shoes for pebbles or anything else that could harm your feet.
2. Wear shoes and socks that fit well.
3. Don’t go barefoot if there is a risk of getting a cut or any foot injury.
4. Don’t use home remedies or treatments you can buy without a prescription (such as corn removers). They can cause an injury to your foot that may be hard to heal.
Diabetes can be hard on your body if it’s not well controlled. It can damage your eyes, heart, blood vessels, kidneys, and nervous system.

But with a few simple tests, you can catch these problems early, when it’s easier to start managing them. So go ahead and schedule these tests and checkups, and mark them on your calendar. (See “Good Health Care Starts With You” on the next page for how often to have these tests.)

**» Get a hemoglobin A1c blood test.** The A1c test shows the average of your blood sugar levels over the past 2 to 3 months. It helps your doctor see whether blood sugar levels have been staying within your target range.

**» Check your blood pressure.** This test measures the pressure of blood flow in the arteries. Controlling blood pressure can help prevent damage to your kidneys, eyes, nerves, and blood vessels. And it can lower your risk of heart problems and stroke.

**» Have your doctor check your feet.** Nerve damage in your feet makes it hard to feel an injury or infection. This exam lets your doctor know if you have nerve damage in your feet.

**» Get a dilated eye exam.** Eye exams can catch eye problems early and can help prevent damage that can lead to blindness.

**» Get a cholesterol and triglyceride test** as often as your doctor recommends it. This test measures the amount of two types of fat in the blood. Too much cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood can raise your risk for heart attack and stroke.

**» Have your urine and blood tested for signs of kidney problems.** Testing for protein in your urine and creatinine in your blood is the best way for your doctor to spot early kidney damage and start treatment.

**» Visit your dentist.** You can get gum disease and tooth decay from having high blood sugar levels for a long time.

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**Vaccine Reminder**

We all try to make as many healthy choices as we can. And one very important choice you can make for yourself is to get the seasonal flu vaccine and make sure you’re up-to-date with your pneumococcal vaccine.

**Flu vaccine:** Since flu viruses are always changing, new vaccines are made each year. That’s why getting a flu vaccine each year is your best chance for protection.

The flu vaccine is recommended for people age 6 months and older. The vaccine is especially important for people with long-term (chronic) health problems, like diabetes, or with heart or lung problems.

The vaccine comes as a shot or as a mist that is sprayed in your nose. Check with your doctor to find out which type of vaccine is best for you.

**Pneumococcal vaccine:** This vaccine can help prevent serious problems caused by bacteria that cause pneumonia and other infections. Two different types of pneumococcal shots are recommended for people age 65 and older.

A pneumococcal vaccine is also recommended for people who smoke and for anyone age 2 years or older with long-term health problems, like diabetes, or with heart or lung problems.

Check with your doctor to see if you need a pneumococcal vaccine.
Create a Plan to Lower Your A1c

You and your doctor agree. It’s time to create a plan to lower your hemoglobin A1c level—a plan that works for you.

If you’re not sure how to start, that’s okay. The key to making any change is to do it one small step at a time.

To start your plan, think about what part of diabetes care you want to focus on first. Is it food? Is it being active, blood sugar checks, or medicine? Pick one area. This is what you create your larger goal from. An example of a larger goal would be, “I will start lowering my A1c by making more good food choices.”

So how can you start making better food choices? For a lot of people, thinking of smaller, easier goals that they know they can meet helps build their confidence in their ability to change. Success with this first step helps you feel ready to take a next step.

This first small goal might be something like, “I will no longer buy snacks at the gas station. I will make this easier to do by only paying for gas at the pump.”

When you’re ready to get started, define a few more details before you set out to work on your goals.

» Decide when you’ll begin, how you’ll prepare ahead of time, and how you want to define success. To reach your larger goal, think of a small, easy goal to start with.

» To help you get through the tougher moments, think about how you’ll handle things that might make you stray from your plan.

» Decide what kind of support will help you when you need it.

» Keep in mind your reason for wanting to make a change.

Good Health Care Starts With You

Taking an active role in your care and partnering with your doctor can help you stay healthy.

Having certain tests on a regular schedule can help you manage your diabetes. Talk with your doctor about the tests below.

• Get a hemoglobin A1c blood test every 3 to 6 months.
• Have your blood pressure checked at every office visit.
• Get a foot exam at every office visit, and get a complete sensory foot exam once a year. And between office visits, it’s a good habit to check your feet every day. Small foot problems can become big ones if you don’t notice and take care of them. So you’ll want to give every part of your foot a close look in good lighting. Look for any signs of infection, cuts, blisters, or calluses.
• Get a dilated eye exam once a year. (You may need the exam less or more often, depending on the results.)
• Get a cholesterol and triglyceride test as often as your doctor recommends it.
• Get a urine test for protein once a year.
• Get a serum creatinine test once a year.
• Have a dental checkup every 6 months.

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Watercress and Endive Salad

**Preparation Time:** 15 minutes  
**Total Time:** 15 minutes  
**Makes:** 4 servings, about 1 cup each

**Ingredients**
- ¾ teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 4 cups watercress, tough stems removed
- 2 hard-boiled eggs (see Tip), grated through the large holes of a box grater
- ½ cup fresh corn kernels
- 2 heads Belgian endive, trimmed and leaves separated
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

**Directions**

1. Whisk lemon zest, lemon juice, oil, and salt in a large bowl. Add watercress, egg, and corn; toss to combine. To serve, arrange about 6 endive leaves on each salad plate in the shape of a star and top with about 1 cup of the salad. Season with pepper.

**Tip:** To hard-boil eggs: Place eggs in a single layer in a saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low and cook at the barest simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from heat, pour out hot water and cover the eggs with ice-cold water. Let stand until cool enough to handle before peeling.

**Per serving:** 136 calories; 14g carbohydrates; 8g protein; 7g fiber; 0g fat (0g saturated fat, 4g monounsaturated fat); 106mg cholesterol; 250mg sodium. **Nutrition Bonus:** Vitamin A (140% daily value), Vitamin C (60% daily value), Potassium (29% daily value), Calcium (20% daily value), Iron (15% daily value).

**Diabetic Exchange:** 2 vegetable, 5 medium-fat meat, 1 fat. *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

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