



SPRING 2021

# DIABETES

## *Information to help you improve your health from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama*

When your body has a hard time controlling blood sugar levels, it creates the condition known as diabetes. This can be because your body does not produce enough of – or has become resistant to – a hormone called insulin, which controls your blood sugar levels. When blood sugar levels get too high, this can cause health problems. Common symptoms of diabetes may include frequent urination, strong thirst, increased fatigue or unexplained weight loss.

## The sweet truth about FRUIT

You probably know fruit contains carbohydrates, and people with diabetes need to watch their carbohydrate intake. But that doesn't mean you should avoid fruit. Just know what you're getting.

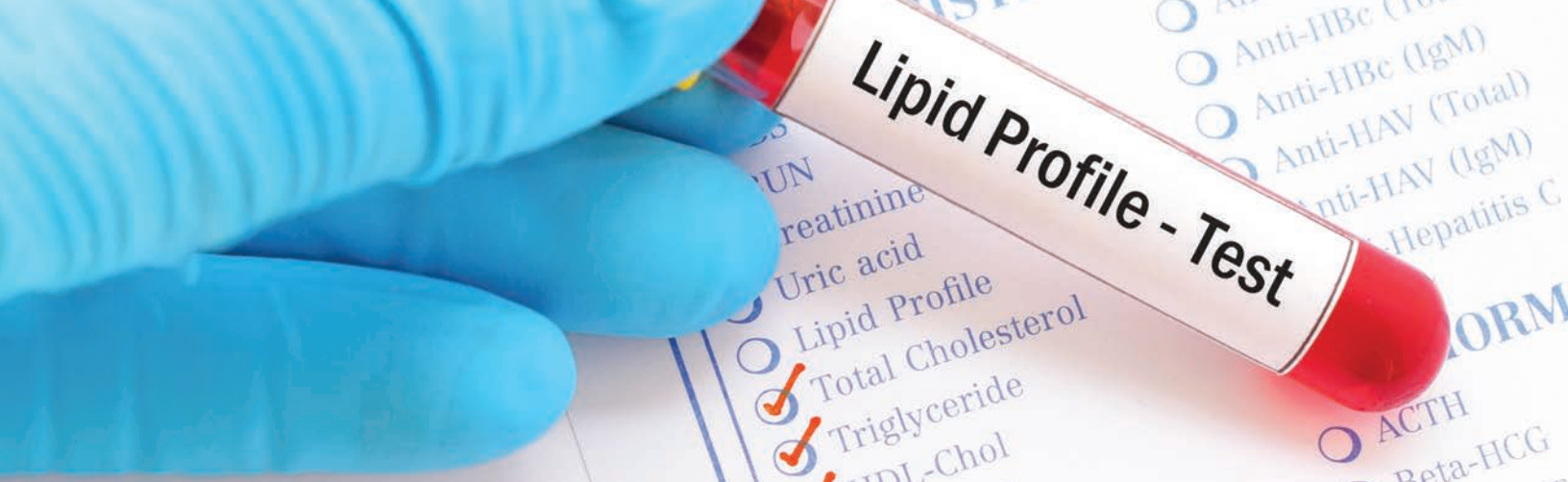
Fruit is a very important part of a healthy diet. Fruits are high in minerals, vitamins, phytochemicals and fiber your body needs to function properly. The nutritional benefits of fruit have been shown to lower your risk for certain cancers, strokes and heart disease. As an added bonus, the fiber in fruit slows digestion which can prevent spikes in blood sugar levels and keep you from feeling hungry between meals.

One serving of fruit contains about 15 grams of carbs, but that serving size is different depending on the fruit. The chart shows examples of what is considered "one serving of fruit" based on that fruit's carbohydrate count.



<b>Raisins</b>	<b>1/8 Cup</b>
<b>Orange or Peach</b>	<b>1 medium fruit</b>
<b>Apple or Banana</b>	<b>1/2 fruit</b>
<b>Honeydew, Raspberries or Blackberries</b>	<b>1 cup</b>
<b>Strawberries</b>	<b>1-1/4 cup</b>
<b>Blueberries or Pineapple</b>	<b>3/4 cup</b>

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# TRIGLYCERIDES

## What are they and why do they matter?

**500+**  
**VERY**  
**HIGH**

**200-**  
**499**  
**HIGH**

**150-**  
**199**  
**BORDERLINE**  
**HIGH**

**<150**  
**NORMAL**

**MILLIGRAMS PER**  
**DECILITER (mg/dL)**

Triglycerides are a kind of fat (or lipid) in your bloodstream. Doctors often point to your triglyceride level as a very important number in your labwork results. The higher your triglyceride number, the more triglycerides you have in your blood. Not to be confused with cholesterol – which helps your body grow cells and develop hormones – triglycerides store energy that can be used to fuel your body. A high triglyceride level may mean your body isn't turning food into energy properly.

**You generally want to keep your triglycerides below 150 mg/dL for optimal health. This can be more difficult for people with diabetes.**

If a person has diabetes, their body does not produce enough insulin to process carbohydrates into energy. Since these excess carbohydrates go unused, they cause

blood sugar levels to be too high. Excess carbohydrates in your cells commonly lead to high triglyceride numbers, and high triglycerides can lead to a hardening of artery walls and an increased risk of stroke, heart disease, or heart attacks. Excess triglycerides can also lead to a potentially dangerous infection of the pancreas called pancreatitis.

But through diet and exercise, triglyceride levels can be controlled. You can often lower them by following a healthy diet, avoiding unhealthy fats and excess sugar, and cutting down on alcoholic drinks. Achieving or maintaining a healthy weight can help you control triglycerides as well.

Sometimes lifestyle changes alone aren't enough to control your triglycerides. If this is the case for you, your doctor may prescribe certain medicines or supplements to help get this number down closer to a normal/healthy range. If you are concerned about your triglycerides, make an appointment and talk to your doctor. Together, you should be able to create a plan to help get this number under control.

**Have questions  
related to your health?**

**TAKE CONTROL**

with our exclusive **Chronic Condition Coaching** program.

*Call **1-888-841-5741** for information and to talk to a clinician.*







# A prescription for EXERCISE

Because of its proven benefits, exercise is often prescribed by doctors and diabetic educators.

Exercise is one of the single best ways to treat and control diabetes, and these are some of the significant benefits:

- **Helps control blood sugar,** because a body that gets enough exercise simply becomes a more efficient food-burning machine.
- **May prevent or reverse the course of type 2 diabetes** when combined with a healthy diet.
- **Helps reduce body fat** and can help you achieve or maintain a healthy weight.
- **Improves strength and balance.**
- **Strengthens your bone density.**
- **Leads to better blood circulation.**
- **Reduces stress** and tends to lead to a better overall quality of life.

## ***WHEN YOU BEGIN AN EXERCISE PROGRAM:***

- 1 Consult with your doctor to make sure your plans are safe.
- 2 Check your blood sugar before and after exercising.
- 3 Take your medicines as prescribed. If you take insulin shots, be proactive about where on your body you take them. If you plan on going for a run, do not inject it in your leg. If doing bench presses, do the injection somewhere other than your arm.
- 4 Wear the right shoes to avoid foot problems.
- 5 Keep a little sugar handy in the form of sugar packets, hard candies, or glucose tablets. If your blood sugar gets too low, you can increase it.
- 6 Understand your daily blood sugar cycles and schedule your exercise sessions for times when you tend to have your levels well under control.
- 7 Hydrate by drinking plenty of water before, during, and after your work out.

A good workout program should include around a half hour to an hour of physical activity most days, or roughly five hours per week. The vast majority of this should be aerobic exercise, but don't neglect the benefits of anaerobic exercise; try to fit in at least two sessions of strength training per week.





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## TALK to a NURSE

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to our free nurse phone lines.  
Call **1-888-841-5741** for  
more information.

# COVID-19 UPDATE

***The arrival of the first COVID-19  
vaccines is a major development in the  
fight against the coronavirus pandemic.***

The current vaccines are approximately  
**95% effective in preventing COVID-19**,  
and provide a high level of protection  
against contracting the virus.

***Getting vaccinated will help keep you  
and your family healthy and safe.***

**MASK UP. STAY SAFE.**

For more information about  
the COVID-19 vaccine and  
its availability in your area,  
contact your physician's office  
or local pharmacy. Additional  
COVID-19 topics and how the  
pandemic could affect you and  
your family can be found at  
**[www.cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)**

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