

Diabetes and Your Sexual Health

Diabetes can affect your sex life. It can cause changes in your body that make sex difficult, whether you're a man or a woman. It can even affect your desire for sex. Your sex life can also affect your diabetes. When you have sexual problems, you're more likely to feel stressed and even depressed. Stress and depression can make it harder to control your blood sugar. But there are some things you can do to have a healthy sex life and live well with diabetes.

Sex and Low Blood Sugar

Whether you're a man or a woman, it's important to avoid low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) when you have sex. If you take insulin or oral medication that can lower your blood sugar, check your blood sugar before sex. If your blood sugar is 100 or lower, eat a snack with 15 grams of carbohydrate before having sex.



How Diabetes Can Affect Men

- **Men with diabetes are three times more likely to have erectile dysfunction (ED).** This means you can't have or keep an erection firm enough for sex. This can happen sometimes or all the time. ED usually begins to affect men after age 65. But it often affects men with diabetes earlier, at about age 50 to 55.

What Men Can Do

- **Control your blood sugar.** High blood sugar can damage the nerves and blood vessels that help you have an erection.
- **Don't drink too much alcohol.** Drinking too much also can damage blood vessels and make ED more likely.
- **If you smoke—stop.** Using any type of tobacco can affect blood vessels and make ED more likely.
- **Exercise.** Exercise helps your blood flow better. This can make it easier for you to have an erection.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eating nutritious foods will help your blood vessels and nerves stay healthy. This can make it easier to have an erection.
- **Talk to your doctor.** There are many ways to treat ED. These include medications (like Viagra, Cialis, and Levitra) and surgical implants for the penis. Your doctor can help you find the right treatment for you.



How Diabetes Can Affect Women

- **For women, high blood sugar can cause dryness in the vagina.** This can make sex uncomfortable or painful. High blood sugar can cause women to have little or no feeling in their genital area. High blood sugar also can make you more likely to get infections in the vagina, which can affect your sex life.

What Women Can Do

- **Control your blood sugar.** High blood sugar can damage the nerves and blood vessels that affect the genital area.
- **Don't drink too much alcohol.** Drinking too much also can damage the blood vessels. This can cause you to have less feeling in your genital area.
- **If you smoke—stop.** Using any type of tobacco can affect blood vessels and cause you to have less feeling in your genital area.
- **Exercise.** Exercise helps your blood flow better. This can help you have more feeling in your genital area.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eating nutritious foods will help your blood vessels and nerves stay healthy. This can help with dryness in the vagina and help you have more feeling in your genital area.
- **Talk to your doctor.** There are many ways to treat these problems. For example, there are medications and creams that can treat dryness in the vagina. Your doctor can help you find the right treatment for you.