

What Problems Can Diabetes Cause?

When you have diabetes, you are at risk for getting other health problems, called complications. This is especially true if your blood sugar levels stay high. Over time, high blood sugar can damage many parts of your body. It can lead to a variety of problems, including problems with your:

Eyes.

High blood sugar levels may cause temporary blurred vision. Blurry vision, floaters, or flashes of light may be a sign of diabetic retinopathy, which can lead to severe vision loss. Having diabetes also puts you at risk for cataracts and glaucoma.

Heart and blood vessels.

High blood sugar damages the lining of blood vessels. This is called hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis. It can lead to stroke, heart attack, peripheral arterial disease, or heart failure. Erection problems can be an early warning sign of blood vessel disease and may mean a higher risk of heart disease.

Nerves.

High blood sugar levels can damage nerves throughout your body. This damage is called diabetic neuropathy. There are different types of neuropathy. They may be caused by damage to nerves that sense things like pain or touch or that control things like your heartbeat, digestion, or blood pressure. Nerve damage can be painful, especially in the feet.

Feet and skin.

You may have less feeling in your feet. This means that you can injure your feet and not know it. Common infections from blisters, ingrown toenails, small cuts, or other problems can quickly become more serious when you have diabetes.

Kidneys.

High blood sugar can damage tiny blood vessels in your kidneys that help filter waste from your blood. This kidney damage is called diabetic kidney disease (sometimes called diabetic nephropathy). You may not have any symptoms until the damage is severe. Then you may notice swelling in your feet or legs or all over your body.