



Being an
active partner
in your care

veteransmates.net.au

KEY ACTIONS FOR LIVING BETTER WITH DIABETES

If you have diabetes, the three key actions in this brochure will help manage your diabetes and reduce your risk of diabetes related complications.

Diabetes explained

Our bodies use the hormone insulin to transport sugars (glucose) from food into cells, where the sugars are converted into energy. With the most common type of diabetes, the body does not make enough insulin or insulin does not work properly, so the glucose builds up in the blood stream. Over time, the glucose lingering in the blood stream has damaging effects on the heart, brain, kidneys, nerve fibres, and eyes. The whole body can be affected; living with diabetes can also affect mental health. For more information visit www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/about-diabetes/what-is-diabetes/

✓ Action 1: Move more and eat well

Making activity part of each day can help you to feel better both physically and mentally. It can help you to lose excess weight, which could help to reduce your blood pressure, blood glucose levels and cholesterol. Your medicines also work

better if you are making exercise and a Mediterranean diet a part of your life. If exercise is not part of your daily routine, look at ways you might add it in.

Start small (e.g. parking a little further away at the local shops or hanging out the washing rather than using the dryer) and build up gradually (e.g. walking further or trying a new activity such as swimming or a local fitness class).

If you need help with your diet and exercise, a dietitian can help you establish healthy eating habits, and an exercise physiologist can develop an exercise plan tailored for you.

Many veterans have also found it helpful to join the free 12-month DVA Heart Health fitness program. For more information and to check whether you are eligible for this program see www.veteranshearthealth.com.au/eligibility

DVA pays for all Gold Card holders and some White Card holders to receive services from a range of healthcare providers as clinically required.

✓ Action 2: Ask your GP about having a DVA funded Medicines Review

A number of different diabetes medicines are available in Australia to help people with type 2 diabetes to manage their glucose levels. Depending on how well they work for you, you might take one diabetes medicine or you might need to take several. Most of these medicines are taken in tablet form but some are given only by injection. For more information about diabetes medicines see www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/managing-diabetes/medicines/

An annual Medicines Review can help you learn more about your diabetes medicines and how to get the best from them (see page 4 for what to expect from having a Medicines Review). As diabetes treatments change and improve over time, your GP and pharmacist can also ensure you are prescribed the medicines that will benefit you the most. For example, if you have certain conditions such as heart or kidney disease, there are medicines that can help these conditions as well as improve your diabetes.

If you have diabetes and answer YES or NOT SURE, talk to your GP about having a Medicines Review:

1. Was your last Medicines Review over 12 months ago?
YES **NOT SURE** **NO**
2. Do you have heart disease and want to find out about specific treatments that might benefit you?
YES **NOT SURE** **NO**
3. Do you have kidney disease and want to find out about specific treatments that might benefit you?
YES **NOT SURE** **NO**
4. Are you concerned about how your medicines work together including medicines you buy without a prescription e.g. vitamins or supplements?
YES **NOT SURE** **NO**

Always talk to your GP or pharmacist before stopping or changing the way you take your diabetes medicine.

✓ Action 3: Use the Annual Diabetes Cycle of Care

Talk to your GP and healthcare team about what you can do to improve your symptoms, quality of life and wellbeing.

Your GP and healthcare team can help you use the Annual Diabetes Cycle of Care to help keep track of the tests and health checks that you need. Your GP might suggest you have a GP Management Plan that will assist you and your healthcare team in following the Diabetes Cycle of Care. You could also be eligible to enrol in the Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Program. Ask your GP whether they offer this service. Your GP can also refer you to a diabetes educator as part of your care

plan. This service may be funded through DVA. See www.dva.gov.au/diabetes

For a list of tests and checks and how often you need them visit www.veteransmates.net.au/topic-57-veterans-advice and www.ndss.com.au/wp-content/uploads/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-your-diabetes-annual-cycle-of-care.pdf For example, HbA1c is a blood test that shows your average blood glucose level over the last few months. This should be done every 6 to 12 months or more often if you have changes to your diabetes treatment or are having difficulties with your blood glucose targets.

✓ What other actions can I take?

➤ Keep your vaccinations up to date. Having COVID-19, the flu or pneumonia can result in more serious illness if you have diabetes.

- Get vaccinated against COVID-19. A 4th dose is encouraged and available for those taking a diabetes medicine, see www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/living-with-diabetes/covid19/

- Have a flu vaccine every year (usually in March or April) and ask your GP when your pneumococcal vaccine is due. Also ask your GP about having the herpes Zoster vaccine for shingles if you haven't already done so.

➤ Talk to your GP about making a plan for if you get sick with the flu, a cold, or other common infections or illnesses.

See www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/sick-day-management/

➤ Make a plan with your GP about what you should do if you get COVID-19 and find out about the antiviral medicines that are now available.

See www.veteransmates.net.au/topic-68-veterans-advice

➤ Quit smoking. If you need help to quit, talk to your GP or pharmacist or call Quitline on 13 78 48.

➤ Having diabetes can affect your mental wellbeing too. There is support available. Speak to a friend, family member or your GP if you are having trouble coping with your diabetes or contact Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling 24 hours a day on 1800 011 046.

What to expect from a Medicines Review



Step 1: You, a family member, carer, nurse, pharmacist or your GP may suggest a Medicines Review.



Step 2: If you and your GP agree to a Medicines Review, your GP writes a referral to a specially trained pharmacist (known as an accredited pharmacist). Your usual community pharmacist might be able to conduct this review; otherwise another pharmacist can do it.



Step 3: The pharmacist contacts you to organise a suitable time and place for the Medicines Review. There is no cost to you for the service.



It is usually conducted in your home, which is the best place. In response to COVID-19, telehealth services such as video conferencing services may be offered where a patient meets certain criteria, e.g. aged over 70, with chronic health conditions or meets the criteria for suspected COVID-19 infection.



Step 4: At the Medicines Review you and the pharmacist discuss all the medicines you are taking. If you wish, have a family member, friend or carer present as well.



Step 5: Following the visit the pharmacist sends your GP a summary which might include better or easier ways to manage your medicines, and whether changes to your medicines might be needed.



Step 6: Make a specific appointment with your GP to discuss the Medicines Review and whether any changes could be of benefit to you. Your GP can give you a written Medication Management Plan on completion of the review.