



Because of this, it is important that you have your physician evaluate you for cardiovascular disease. This evaluation may include the following tests, among others, in conjunction with consideration of your individual and family medical history:

- **Blood tests** to measure cholesterol, blood glucose, inflammation and other factors
- **Diagnostic tests** such as a treadmill stress test to gauge blood flow to the heart, imaging tests to look for blockages in arteries (large blood vessels), or a simple blood pressure cuff test called the ankle-brachial index (ABI) to check for reduced blood flow to the legs

Depending on test results, treatment may consist of a combination of several options:

- **Lifestyle changes** to improve diet, increase exercise, and quit smoking
- **Medication** adjustments or the addition of new medications
- **An interventional procedure** to reopen blockages in a blood vessel by inserting a thin tube called a **catheter** into an artery (large blood vessel) and feeding it to the site of the blockage where a tiny balloon can be opened to push the blockage aside
- **Surgery** to remove blockages in the arteries that supply the brain with blood or bypass surgery to reroute blood around blockages in the arteries that supply the heart or legs with blood

New Research on Treating Severe Heart Disease in People with Diabetes

A recent study offered helpful information about treating severe heart disease – blockages in three or more heart arteries – in people who also have diabetes. Study participants received either **coronary bypass graft surgery** (open-heart surgery) or an interventional procedure with an **angioplasty** balloon to reopen an artery and place a tiny metal cage called a **stent** to permanently prop the artery open.

The patients with diabetes and multiple, severe blockages who had bypass surgery were less likely to die or have another nonfatal heart attack within five years. However, these patients were somewhat more likely to have a stroke.

This new research can help influence treatment decisions made by cardiologists and other healthcare providers.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Diabetes and Your Heart Health

- How high is my **risk** for cardiovascular disease, based on diabetes and my other risk factors?
- What **risk factors** do I have (high blood pressure, cholesterol, obesity, etc.), and how can I reduce my risk?
- What **dietary choices** should I be making to manage both diabetes and my cardiovascular health?
- What level of **exercise** is safe for me and will also have cardiovascular benefits?
- Are there **lab tests** or **diagnostic tests** that you would recommend based on my risk factors?

Questions to Ask If You Have Been Diagnosed with Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes

- Which **medical professionals** should I be seeing and how often?
- What are my **treatment options**? What combination of lifestyle, medication, and in-hospital treatments/surgery may be necessary to combat cardiovascular disease and diabetes?
- Do any **blood vessels** to my heart have serious blockages? If so, how many? Am I a better candidate for **bypass surgery** or for **angioplasty and stenting**?
- What is my **prognosis**? What are the likely **outcomes**?
- Will I be able to have my desired **quality of life**? What can I do to improve the odds of this?

What Should I Do If I Have Other Questions?

Ask them. Remember that though the risks are substantially higher that someone with diabetes will also have heart disease, each individual is different. The key is to establish with your physician what your baseline cardiovascular health is now. Then, periodically ask your physician, “Have we checked my heart health recently?” Identifying and treating cardiovascular disease sooner rather than later will increase the odds of being able to work with your physician to slow or reverse the disease process.