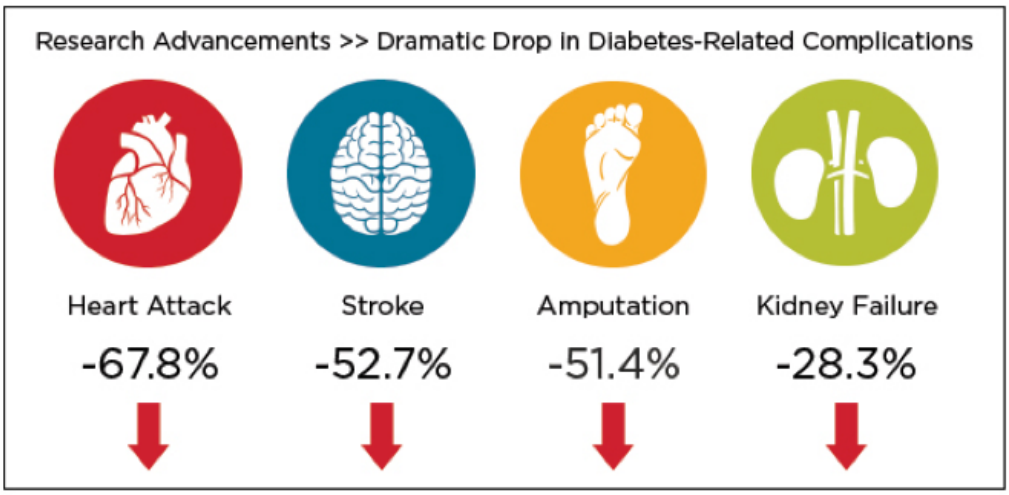
With new technology and intensive therapy, you can significantly reduce your risk for complications.



However, high blood glucose levels over time can lead to long-term complications. Major organs, as well as the vessels and nerves that supply them, can be damaged. Here are some of the most common complications people with type 1 diabetes face.

Cardiovascular disease – High glucose levels can be linked to higher cholesterol and contribute to damage to the blood vessels increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

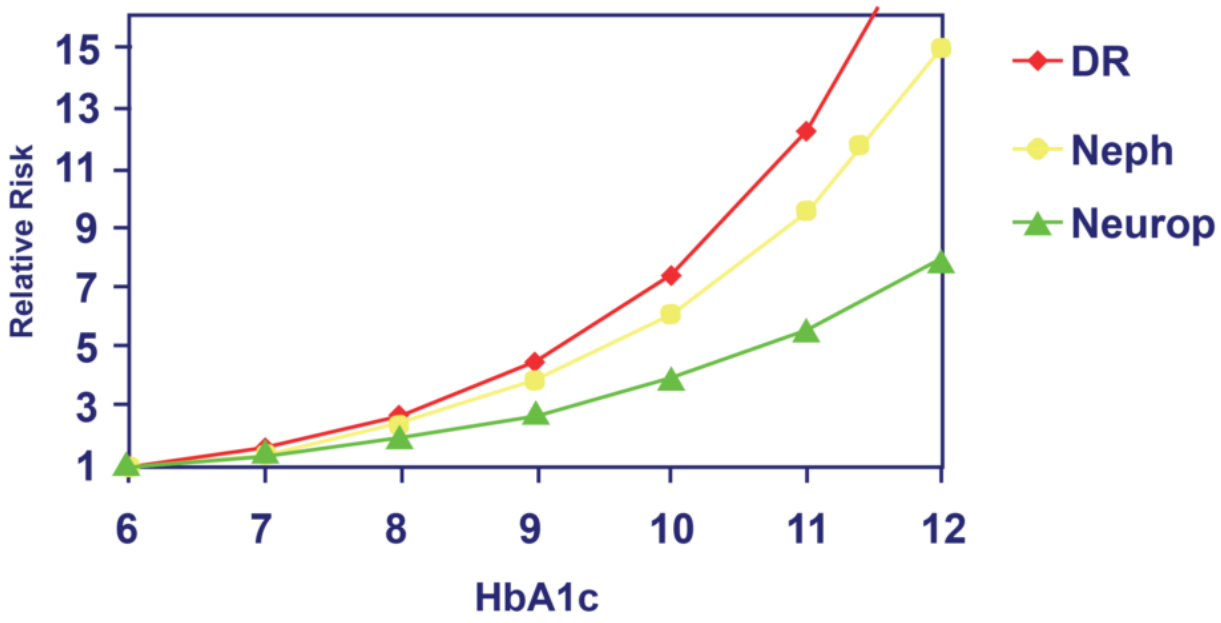
Kidney disease (nephropathy) – When glucose levels are high, the kidneys have to work extra hard to filter waste from the blood. High glucose levels can damage the kidneys and the nerves leading to them.

Nerve problems (neuropathy) – high glucose levels can cause nerve damage in the legs, feet, arms and hands . Symptoms include pain, numbness and weakness. In severe cases, poor circulation or infections can occur and lead to amputation of a limb.

Eye problems (diabetic retinopathy) – extra glucose causes damage to the vessels in the back part of the eye (called the retina). Symptoms include blurry vision and poorer daytime and nighttime vision. If left untreated, diabetic retinopathy causes vision loss.

Dental problems – When diabetes is not controlled, high glucose levels in your saliva can lead to plaque and gum disease.

DCCT: Relative Risk of Progression of Diabetic Complications by Mean HbA1c



Maintaining good blood glucose control is the best prevention for diabetes-related complications. Talk with your doctor about routine screening that can be done to detect complications early.

Reviewed by Anastasia Albanese-O'Neill, PhD, APRN, CDCES on 11/26/25

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

Recommended

Understanding A1c

What is Hyperglycemia?

What is Hypoglycemia?

What are Ketones

What is DKA?

External Sources

Preventing Diabetes Problems— NIDDK

Cholesterol Packet – American Heart Association

Blood Glucose Control Studies for Type 1 Diabetes: DCCT and EDIC

The Diabetes Control and Complications Trial/Epidemiology of Diabetes Interventions and Complications Study at 30 Years: Overview — Diabetes Care

Microvascular and Macrovascular Complications of Diabetes — Clinical Diabetes

Diabetes Research: Reducing the Burden of Diabetes at All Ages and Stages 2013 — NIDDK