How type 2 diabetes can affect your body

Your eyes
Diabetes can cause health problems that affect different parts of the body. Be sure to have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year. Diabetes can damage your eyes and is the leading cause of blindness among adults. It may cause these common eye problems: diabetic retinopathy (reh-tin-AH-path-ee), cataracts (CAT-uh-racts), and glaucoma (glau-CO-mah). Controlling your blood sugar (also called blood glucose) can help prevent or delay eye problems.

Your kidneys
Talk with your health care provider about kidney disease and what you can do to prevent it. Diabetes is the main cause of kidney disease and kidney failure. Controlling your blood sugar level and blood pressure can help prevent or delay kidney disease.

Your heart
Talk to your health care provider about ways to lower your risk of heart disease. Disease of the heart and blood vessels, known as cardiovascular (car-dee-oh-VAS-kyuh-ler) disease, is a major cause of death in people with diabetes. People with type 2 diabetes are up to 4 times more likely to have heart disease and stroke than people without diabetes.

Managing your diabetes can help prevent or delay other health problems.

Provided as an educational resource by Merck
How type 2 diabetes can affect your body

Your nervous system
Controlling your blood sugar can help prevent or delay nerve damage and related problems. Up to 70% of people with diabetes have nerve damage, called neuropathy (new-ROP-uh-thee). This damage may cause loss of feeling in the feet, hands, and legs. Nerve damage may also cause problems with digestion (the process of breaking down the food you eat), the bladder, and the heart and can cause erectile dysfunction (ED).

Your sexual function
Talk openly with your health care provider about any sexual problems you might be having and what you can do to prevent or treat them. Diabetes increases the risk of sexual problems, including erectile dysfunction, little or no sexual desire, and vaginal dryness.

Your feet
Talk to your health care provider right away if you notice any problems with your feet. Nerve damage, circulation (blood flow) problems, and infections can cause serious foot problems. In severe cases these can lead to amputation (AM-pu-TA-tion) (removal) of part of or the entire leg. In many cases amputations can be prevented with regular checkups. Be sure to check your feet every day for cuts, sores, bruises, dry cracks, redness, loss of feeling, and other signs of infection.

It is important to work with your health care provider to review all your treatment options and make a plan that is best for you.

For other health information, visit MerckSource® at mercksource.com.