

# Long Term Complications

• Diabetes, if not well managed, can lead to a variety of long-term complications affecting various organs and systems in the body. These complications typically develop over time and may include:

1. **Cardiovascular disease:** Diabetes significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular complications, including coronary artery disease, heart attack (myocardial infarction), stroke, peripheral artery disease, and heart failure. Elevated blood sugar levels, along with other risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity, contribute to the development of cardiovascular disease in individuals with diabetes.
2. **Nephropathy (kidney disease):** Diabetes is a leading cause of kidney disease (diabetic nephropathy), which can progress to chronic kidney disease and end-stage renal disease (ESRD) requiring dialysis or kidney transplantation. Elevated blood sugar levels and high blood pressure can damage the small blood vessels in the kidneys, leading to impaired kidney function and proteinuria (excretion of protein in the urine).
3. **Neuropathy (nerve damage):** Diabetes can cause damage to the nerves (diabetic neuropathy), leading to a variety of symptoms such as tingling, numbness, burning sensation, or pain, usually starting in the feet and hands and progressing upward. Neuropathy can also affect the nerves that control internal organs, leading to gastrointestinal symptoms, sexual dysfunction, and problems with bladder control.
4. **Retinopathy (eye damage):** Diabetes is a leading cause of vision loss and blindness in adults due to diabetic retinopathy, a condition characterized by damage to the blood vessels in the retina. Diabetic retinopathy can lead to vision impairment, retinal detachment, and ultimately blindness if left untreated.
5. **Foot complications:** Diabetes increases the risk of foot problems, including peripheral neuropathy (loss of sensation), peripheral artery disease (reduced blood flow to the feet), foot ulcers, infections, and slow wound healing. Left untreated, foot complications can lead to serious infections, gangrene, and the need for amputation.
6. **Skin complications:** Diabetes can affect the skin in various ways, increasing the risk of skin infections, fungal infections, bacterial infections, and slow wound healing. Skin conditions such as diabetic dermopathy, necrobiosis lipoidica diabetorum, and diabetic bullae are also more common in individuals with diabetes.
7. **Gastroparesis:** Diabetes can affect the nerves that control the muscles of the digestive tract, leading to delayed gastric emptying (gastroparesis).

Symptoms of gastroparesis may include nausea, vomiting, bloating, abdominal pain, and erratic blood sugar levels.

8. Sexual dysfunction: Diabetes can contribute to sexual dysfunction in both men and women, including erectile dysfunction in men and decreased libido, vaginal dryness, and difficulty achieving orgasm in women.
9. Dental complications: Individuals with diabetes are at increased risk of dental problems, including gum disease (periodontitis), tooth decay, tooth loss, and oral infections.

Early detection and prompt treatment of complications are also essential for minimizing their impact on overall health and quality of life. Regular monitoring and screening for diabetes-related complications are recommended for individuals with diabetes to detect and address potential issues early.