

Understanding Medical Terms

Now that you know some of the tests done to check for CAD or diabetes, here are some of the words used by doctors to describe different parts of these conditions. Ask your doctor questions if you hear a word you don't understand.

- **A1C:** a test that measures how much glucose (sugar) has been sticking to the matter in red blood cells that carries oxygen to the cells of the body. It is looked at to see your average blood sugar levels over the past 2 or 3 months.
- **ACE inhibitor:** a medicine taken by mouth that lowers blood pressure; ACE stands for angiotensin (an-gee-oh-TEN-sin) converting enzyme. For people with diabetes, especially those who have protein in the urine, it also helps slow down kidney damage.
- **Adult-onset diabetes:** type 2 diabetes.
- **ARB:** a medicine taken by mouth that lowers blood pressure; ARB stands for angiotensin (an-gee-oh-TEN-sin) receptor blocker.
- **Atrium:** the upper chamber of the heart- there is a right and left atrium.
- **Artery:** a blood vessel that carries blood away from the heart to the rest of the body.
- **Blood pressure:** the pressure of the blood within the arteries which is produced by the movement of the heart muscle. The first number is the systolic (sis-TAH-lik) pressure, or the pressure when the heart pushes blood out into the arteries. The second number is the diastolic (DY-uh-STAH-lik) pressure, or the pressure when the heart rests.

- **Body Mass Index (BMI):** a measurement tool used to find a person's body weight in comparison to their height. BMI is used to find out if a person is underweight, normal weight, overweight or obese.
- **Bypass:** an operation in which a surgeon creates a new pathway for the movement of fluids in the body. For example, a coronary bypass is when the surgeon places a new blood vessel to get blood to the heart because the old one is clogged. Think of it as a new, faster detour.
- **Cardiac arrest:** a medical emergency where the heart stops beating.
- **Cardiovascular:** having to do with the heart and blood vessels.
- **Cholesterol:** a waxy fat-like substance naturally found in cell walls. Too much cholesterol may stay in the arteries of the heart causing heart disease.
- **Coronary arteries:** the vessels that circle the heart. They supply the heart muscle with oxygen rich blood.
- **CT scan:** the Computerized Tomography scan is a computer program that takes data from multiple X-Ray images and creates pictures on a screen.
- **Diabetes mellitus:** better known as diabetes, it means one has high levels of glucose (sugar) in the blood.
- **Diabetic coma:** coma in a person with diabetes due to the buildup of ketones (substance made when the body breaks down fat for energy) in the bloodstream.
- **Diabetic retinopathy (REH-tih-NOP-uh-thee):** diabetic eye disease; damage to the small blood vessels in the retina. May result in loss of vision.

- **Glucose or dextrose:** the sugar that is the leading source of energy in the body. The body makes glucose from proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Cells can only use glucose with the help of insulin. Insulin is like the key that lets the glucose get into the cell.
- **Glycemic index:** a measure of the ability of different types of foods that contain carbohydrate to raise the blood glucose (sugar) levels within 2 hours.
- **HDL cholesterol:** HDL cleans your blood vessels of bad cholesterol. It is considered the “good cholesterol” since the higher your HDL, the lower your risk of CAD.
- **Heart attack:** the death of the heart muscle due to the loss of blood supply, usually caused by a complete blockage of a coronary artery.
- **Heart disease:** any disorder that affects the heart.
- **High blood pressure:** blood pressure count exceeding 140 over 90 mmHg. Normal blood pressure is 120 over 80 or less.
- **Hypercholesterolemia:** this means there is too much cholesterol in your blood.
- **Hyperglycemia:** this means there is too much sugar in your blood.
- **Hypertension:** high blood pressure. Repeated high blood pressure level.
- **Hypoglycemia:** this means there is not enough sugar in your blood.
- **Insulin:** a natural hormone produced by the pancreas that controls the level of the sugar/glucose in the blood. Cells can only produce energy if they are assisted by insulin.

- **Ketone:** a chemical produced when there is a shortage of insulin in the blood and the body breaks down body fat for energy. High levels of ketones can lead to diabetic ketoacidosis and coma. Sometimes referred to as ketone bodies.
- **LDL Cholesterol:** considered the “bad” cholesterol. It builds up on the walls of your blood vessels making them too narrow for blood to get through.
- **Lipid:** another name for fat.
- **Myocardial Infarction:** another term for a heart attack. This occurs when a blood vessel (an artery) to the heart is blocked.
- **Nephropathy** (neh-FROP-uh-thee): Disease of the kidneys. Hyperglycemia and hypertension can damage the kidney. When the kidneys are damaged, protein leaks out of the kidneys into the urine. Damaged kidneys can no longer remove waste and extra fluids from the bloodstream.
- **Neuropathy** (ne-ROP-uh-thee): disease of the nervous system. The three major forms in people with diabetes are peripheral neuropathy, autonomic neuropathy, and mononeuropathy. The most common form is peripheral neuropathy, which affects mainly the legs and feet.
- **Obstruction:** the blockage of a passageway.
- **Palpitations** : feelings of irregular and or strong beating of the heart.
- **Postprandial blood glucose** (post-PRAN-dee-ul): the blood glucose level taken 1 to 2 hours after eating.
- **Preprandial blood glucose** (pree-PRAN-dee-ul): the blood glucose level taken before eating.

- **Self-management:** the ongoing process of managing a health condition, such as diabetes. Includes meal planning, planned physical activity, blood glucose monitoring, taking medicines, handling episodes of illness and of low and high blood glucose, managing the condition when traveling, and more. The person with a chronic health condition designs his or her own self-management treatment plan in consultation with a variety of health care professionals such as doctors, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, and others.
- **Stent:** a tube placed into a vessel or passageway to keep it open.
- **Stroke:** the sudden death of some brain cells due to a lack of oxygen. This occurs when the blood flow to the brain is blocked by a clogging of the artery to the brain.
- **Vein:** a blood vessel that carries blood that is low in oxygen from the body back to the heart.
- **Ventricle:** the lower chamber of the heart – there is a right and left ventricle.
- **Vessel:** a tube in the body that carries fluids.