

Study finds following heart health guidelines also reduces diabetes risk

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Tim Anderson takes his blood pressure at home. A new study by The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center found that following seven lifestyle guidelines, including maintaining healthy blood pressure levels, reduces the risk of developing diabetes by 80 percent. Credit: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

Lifestyle and health factors that are good for your heart can also prevent diabetes, according to a new study by researchers at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and College of Medicine that published today in *Diabetologia*, the journal of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes.

Diabetes is a growing problem in the United States, with nearly a third of the population living with diabetes or prediabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Dr. Joshua J. Joseph, an endocrinologist and assistant professor at Ohio State Wexner Medical Center, wants to bring those numbers down. He studies various ways to prevent diabetes, and his latest work looked at how cardiovascular health can impact diabetes risk.

"This research adds to our collective understanding about how physicians can help their patients prevent a number of serious diseases, including heart disease, cancer and now diabetes," said Dr. K. Craig Kent, dean of the College of Medicine.

The team led by Joseph assessed diabetes among 7,758 participants in the REasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) Study and used the American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7 as a guide for measuring heart health among the group.

The Life's Simple 7 [health factors](#) and lifestyle behaviors that are associated with cardiovascular health are [physical activity](#), diet, weight, cholesterol, [blood pressure](#), blood glucose and tobacco use.

Overall, the study participants who were in the recommended, ideal ranges for at least four of the seven factors had a 70 percent lower risk of developing diabetes over the next 10 years.

"What's interesting is when we compared people who had normal blood

glucose and those who already had impaired [blood glucose](#)," Joseph said. "Those in normal levels who attained four or more guideline factors had an 80 percent lower risk of developing diabetes. Those who were already diabetic or prediabetic and met four of the factors had no change in lowering their risk for diabetes."

Joseph said this research proves using prevention strategies from the very beginning is key to helping Americans avoid diabetes.

"Healthy people need to work to stay healthy. Follow the guidelines. Don't proceed to high blood sugar and then worry about stopping diabetes. By that point, people need high-intensity interventions that focus on physical activity and diet to promote weight loss and, possibly, medications to lower the risk of diabetes," Joseph said.

Community outreach is one way Joseph and his team put their research to practical use. They attend wellness walks, community days and other gatherings around central Ohio to help educate people about diabetes prevention and starting healthy habits.

"We don't wait for people to come to us as patients. We're very engaged in taking our work from the lab and applying it to our populations so we can help keep our communities healthy," Joseph said.

More information: Joshua J. Joseph et al. Ideal cardiovascular health, glycaemic status and incident type 2 diabetes mellitus: the REasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) study, *Diabetologia* (2019). [DOI: 10.1007/s00125-018-4792-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00125-018-4792-y)

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