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### Your Heart and Diabetes

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**HARDING**  
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# Over the Counter

Rodney G. Richmond, RPh, MS, CGP, FASCP  
Harding University College of Pharmacy



## Your Heart and Diabetes

By Jimmy Skaggs, PharmD Candidate and Rodney G. Richmond, RPh, MS, CGP, FASCP

SCRIPT  
YOUR  
FUTURE

**February is American Heart Month!** The leading cause of death in America is heart disease. In the state of Arkansas, we rank among the highest rates of diabetes, making us more susceptible to heart disease. There are two types of diabetes, Type I (also known as insulin-dependent, or juvenile-diabetes) and Type II (also known as insulin resistant or adult onset diabetes). Type II diabetes in particular is can be prevented or can be controlled in its early stages with a healthy life style if you are committed to making the right changes. When we talk about diabetes and its link to heart disease we need to consider 3 key health measures: **The ABC's of Diabetes**



**A1c Test:** This is a measure of how well-controlled your blood sugar has been on average over the past several weeks. When diabetes is not managed properly, uncontrolled blood sugar levels can damage the blood vessels in your heart and other organs (e.g. eyes, kidneys, feet) and can, for example, affect your vision and wound healing.

**Blood Pressure:** Your blood pressure is very important if you have diabetes. High blood pressure can also cause damage to your heart and blood vessels and over time can lead to heart disease. Monitoring your blood pressure regularly is important whether you have diabetes or not. The target goal for blood pressure varies for different people and you will need to ask your doctor or pharmacist what your goal should be. Pharmacies often have blood pressure machines you can use to monitor your blood pressure between doctor's visits. It is a good idea to keep track of your blood pressure readings in a journal so you can share them with your doctor. Controlling your blood pressure can reduce your chance of having a stroke, heart attack, or developing heart failure.



**Cholesterol:** Managing your cholesterol is important for protecting your heart. When "bad cholesterol" (LDL cholesterol) builds up, it can lead to a heart attack or other heart problems. "Good cholesterol" (HDL cholesterol) helps our body to remove bad cholesterol and is also important to your health. A good way remember the difference is: "L" in LDL stands for "life-threatening" and "H" in HDL stands for "healthy". Having a healthy balance between these two types of cholesterol is important for preventing a heart attack or stroke.

In the spirit of American Heart Month be sure to remember the ABC's of diabetes. And while they are important to diabetics, these same ABC's are important for all of us in maintaining heart health. Living a healthy lifestyle can help control these ABC's and you can do that by:

- Eating healthy balanced meals, avoiding calories in sugary drinks, and seeking healthy fats, carbohydrates and protein. Aim to eat vegetables that provide nutritious value, leaner cuts of meat and fish, and healthier fats. In addition drinking enough water can help our overall health, as well as reduce our hunger and urges to snack.
- In addition to eating healthier, cardiovascular exercise is important. If you do not currently exercise it is important to make sure you are healthy enough to do so by talking to your doctor. You may also need to start slow, walking just a few minutes every day and building up to 20 minutes daily, or every couple of days. We should aim for 150 minutes of exercise each week. I know finding this much time can be a challenge in our busy lives, but the reward of protecting your heart is well worth the price! \*



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# Contents

## FEATURES

New Year's (Financial) Resolutions .....	48
Glimpse Of Heaven Through The Eyes Of A Loved One .....	52
God Still Speaks .....	54
Giving Back .....	56
Wedding Barn And Searcy Living Tea .....	60
An Afternoon With Mr. Harris .....	62
The Heart Of The Matter .....	66
Cruisin' Down The River .....	70
White County Kicking Cancer Foundation .....	76
Greek Life: More Than Just Letters .....	78
All American Citizen: Frances Schoonover .....	80
Adventure: Bet You Didn't Know .....	82
Name That Deer Contest .....	84
Keys For Making Life Better .....	88
Tips For Beginning Your Fresh Start .....	89

## DEPARTMENTS

Publisher's Note .....	11
Hope Believe .....	12
Fashion Fun .....	22
We The People .....	26
Over The Counter .....	74
Fab DIY .....	92
Dinner And A Magazine .....	94
Crossword And Riddles .....	96



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56



“Surround yourself with people who have **dreams, desire** and **ambition**; they’ll help you push for and realize your own.”

~ Unknown

