

# Why Diabetes Treatment Shouldn't Focus Only on Controlling Blood Sugar Levels

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When treating people with type 2 diabetes, doctors usually focus exclusively on strict control of their glucose levels to treat the blood sugar disorder, although elevated blood sugar levels can raise blood pressure and cholesterol, which can lead to heart disease. Now, trial results reviewed in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* show that treating the illness with medications that control blood sugar levels while reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease could better outcomes for patients, reports [ScienceDaily.com](https://www.sciencedaily.com).

For the study, researchers at Case Western Reserve University checked the assessments of four clinical trials published in the past 1.5 to 2 years in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that demonstrated current medicines used to control blood sugar levels as well as the test for hemoglobin A1c, or average blood sugar levels during previous months, also helped to better health results for individuals with type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular illness.

In the trials, scientists recruited patients with heart disease or stroke to test the safety of different medications—pioglitazone, empagliflozin, liraglutide, or semaglutide—that reduced blood sugar. Interestingly, researchers found that patients on these drugs with or at risk of type 2 diabetes also experienced improvements for their cardiovascular problems.

“Our review focuses on the need for a paradigm shift on how we should think about management of type 2 diabetes. I believe it will necessitate a rethinking of goals and approaches by guideline committees,” said Faramarz Ismail-Beigi, MD, PhD, a professor of medicine at Case Western Reserve University and a researcher involved in the study. “We also hope that the FDA [Federal Drug Administration] might consider approving new medications for management of type 2 diabetes not only based on their safety profile and their efficacy to control blood glucose but also whether the medication reduces overall mortality and cardiovascular-related mortality.”

Previously, findings from studies that concentrated only on tight control of blood sugar levels showed that patients with diabetes didn't enjoy a cardiovascular benefit from this treatment approach. What's more, one large clinical trial on type 2 diabetes management found evidence that this type of therapy might be harmful to cardiovascular outcomes or mortality.

The researchers said it's the first time that scientists have seen that glucose-lowering meds can also improve outcomes for cardiovascular issues. They think it's possible that newer medicines in these classes of drugs, used singly or in combination, may prove to be more effective in managing type 2 diabetes and stopping heart disease, even during the disease's early stages.

[Click here](#) to learn more about how diabetes can raise your risk of a heart attack.

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