How can we reduce the risks of developing diabetes and cardiovascular complications? Addressing modifiable risk factors is certainly key to reduce such risks. The answer lies in two words: healthy lifestyle. A healthy lifestyle makes a huge difference. A healthy lifestyle will make you feel fit, physically and morally. Several elements contribute to a healthy lifestyle:
1. A balanced diet
2. Physical exercise
3. Diabetes Management and medical advice
4. No smoking
5. Social life

1. **A BALANCED DIET**
   - Eating healthily helps to control blood sugar levels, maintain body weight, control high cholesterol, reduce high blood pressure, and prevent heart disease.
   - The so-called “diabetic diet” is not in fact a diet, but rather a healthy eating plan ideal for all the family.

Food is a source of different nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, etc. You should eat a variety of foods to get the nutrients you need. The food pyramid is a good indication of what food you should eat every day. It provides general guidelines of how to choose a healthy eating plan that is right for you, calls for eating a variety of foods and at the same time the right amount of calories to maintain a healthy weight.
Reducing the Burden: Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease

- Start with plenty (6-11 servings) of breads, cereals, rice, pasta: these complex carbohydrates provide B-vitamins, minerals and fibre. Carbohydrates are the main source of energy for the body.

- Eat a lot (3-5 servings) of vegetables: these are also carbohydrates which are a fantastic source of vitamins and fibre and which are naturally low in fat and calories. Yellow or orange vegetables like carrots are a great source of vitamin A, whereas green vegetables from the cabbage and pepper families (cabbage, broccoli, etc) are rich in vitamin C.

- Enjoy (2-4 servings) fruit: they are another source of carbohydrate energy and of vitamins and potassium. They make a great snack or a healthy dessert. Orange fruits like apricots are rich in vitamin A, citrus fruits are full of vitamin C, others such as mangos and papayas have both vitamins A and C.

- Add 2-3 servings from the dairy products group: milk, yogurt and cheese are a source of proteins which have a wide range of vital functions. Try to choose reduced fat dairy products whenever possible.

- Limit meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans and nuts to 2-3 servings. These are also a major source of protein and contain important vitamins and minerals too. Do choose lean cuts of meat and take the skin off poultry.

- Finally, remember to go easy on fats, oils, and sweets. Try to minimize saturated fats which are found in animal products such as butter and cheese, and try to focus on unsaturated fats found in vegetable oils: they are considered to be healthier. However do limit the overall intake of fat. Also try to minimize sweets which tend to be high in calories and low in other nutritional benefits.

Consult your doctor or dietitian to work out a meal plan with you. You need an individualized eating plan. For example, a young athlete with type 1 diabetes will have other nutritional needs than, say, a small woman with type 2 diabetes who needs to lose some weight.

2. PHYSICAL EXERCISE

- Exercise helps improve fitness, burn calories and thus reduce body fat and control your weight.
- For people with diabetes, exercise lowers blood sugar. Like insulin, it helps your body use its blood sugar efficiently.

Activity can be any form of movement that continues for ten minutes or longer, making you mildly warm and quickening your breathing. Activities like walking, vacuuming and gardening can all count. In particular walking is a great exercise which you can do outdoors, alone or with friends and during breaks at work, without spending any money. Regular aerobic exercises like walking, jogging, swimming or cycling, use a wider range of muscles and may get you fitter faster and can help to reduce excess weight, prevent diabetes and reduce cardiovascular disease risk factors. It is not necessary to spend any money on activity.

The recommended amount of time is 30 minutes of moderate to intense activity each day. That can mean for instance three times 10 minutes walking.

Do exercises that you like, otherwise you will come to hate exercise.

Finally, relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation can play a role in the prevention of cardiovascular disease.