

How to control your diabetes.

The way to control diabetes is to keep your blood glucose level as close to normal as possible. There are several important steps you can take to help keep your blood glucose level in the proper range.

1. First, see a doctor. This is the most important thing to do if you think you have diabetes. Only a doctor can accurately determine whether or not you have the disease and the best approach for treating it. If it is determined that you have diabetes:

2. Take your medication as prescribed. There are many excellent medications available, including pills, liquids and insulin increasing drugs that can be taken under the direction of a doctor.

3. Monitor your blood glucose level regularly. Without frequent and accurate measurements, you will not know whether there is a need to modify your medication and/or treatment schedule in order to maintain a healthy blood glucose level.

4. Watch what you eat. Eat regular meals at about the same time each day. Skipping meals or not eating frequently enough can make your glucose level fall. Eat a variety of foods. Cut down on fats, sugar, salt and alcohol.

5. Be active. Physical activity can help you feel better, control your blood sugar and weight, and even help prevent heart and circulatory problems. Always be sure to consult with your physician before increasing your activity level or starting any kind of exercise program.

Where can you get the care you need?

If you have diabetes, there are a number of programs available to provide continuing professional healthcare services and support, according to your level of need. They include:

In-Residence Facilities offer services to people who need either short-term or long-term 24-hour skilled nursing supervision, rehabilitation, or help with daily living activities. Many of these facilities have diabetes management programs that can provide specialized care for the advanced stages of the disease and treat related complications.

Short-Term Rehabilitation providers offer specialized care and services, usually during the transition between hospital and home or alternate level of care. Length of stay ranges from several days to several months, depending on the patient's condition and his or her ability to function independently.



For more information call:

American Diabetes Association
1-800-DIABETES (342-2383)
www.diabetes.org

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
1-877-CDC-DIAB
www.cdc.gov/diabetes

National Diabetes Education Program
1-800-438-5383
www.ndep.nih.gov

National Diabetes
Information Clearinghouse
1-800-860-8747
www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

To order additional complimentary copies of this pamphlet, call **217-735-1538**.

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Diabetes

Understanding the Disease



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What is diabetes?

Diabetes *mellitus* is a group of diseases characterized by high levels of blood glucose (sugar) that result from defects in the way insulin is produced and used by the body. What this means is that when we eat food, it is turned into glucose for our bodies to use as energy. The pancreas then produces a hormone called insulin to help get the glucose into our cells. If a person is diabetic, his or her body cannot make enough insulin or use the insulin that it does make effectively. This causes the glucose to build up in the body, resulting in a variety of serious and often life-threatening conditions. It is important to know that while there is no known cure for diabetes, it can be controlled.



Who is affected?

Diabetes occurs in every age group, from young children to the elderly. The most common form is called Type II diabetes, also known as Adult Onset diabetes, and it affects over 17 million Americans, including a growing number of older adults. In fact, one in every five seniors over the age of 65 has the disease. Because diabetes cannot be cured and often goes undiagnosed (estimates are that nearly 6 million people are unaware that they have the disease), the key to success in controlling diabetes rests in early detection,

proper medical care and specific lifestyle changes. Like all chronic conditions, diabetes will get progressively worse and may lead to serious health complications unless it is properly managed.

What are the risk factors?

There are several well-established risk factors associated with diabetes, including:

- Obesity
- Membership in a high risk group (African-American, Asian, Hispanic or American Indian)
- Family history of diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Heart conditions
- Had diabetes during pregnancy
- Lack of exercise or physical activity

If you have some of these risk factors, ask your doctor to test you for diabetes.



What complications are caused by diabetes?

Diabetes can have a dramatic impact on many of the chronic health conditions that affect older adults. For example, diabetics may suffer from:

Heart Disease - Adults with diabetes have heart disease death rates that are two to four times higher than those without the disease. In fact, heart disease is the leading cause of death among diabetics.

High Blood Pressure - Almost two out of every three people who have diabetes also have high blood pressure, which is a leading risk factor for stroke.

Stroke - The risk of having a stroke is two to four times higher for diabetics.

Kidney Disease - People with diabetes account for approximately 40% of all deaths from kidney disease.

Amputation - The majority of all lower limb amputations in the U.S. are performed on people who have diabetes.

Some of these conditions may also be developed earlier in life because of diabetes.

What are the warning signs?

Many people with diabetes experience some of the following symptoms:

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme hunger
- Sudden vision changes
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Feeling tired often
- Sores that heal slowly
- More infections than usual

If you have any of these symptoms, it is important to visit your doctor and get a prompt, accurate diagnosis.

