

PATIENT INFORMATION

DIABETES

WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is a disease in which glucose (sugar) builds up in the blood and overflows into the urine. If you have diabetes, your body doesn't make enough insulin or doesn't respond to insulin the right way. Insulin helps the body absorb glucose (sugar) for energy. Diabetes causes sugar to build up in the blood.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DIABETES?

There are three types of diabetes: insulin-dependent (type 1) diabetes, non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes and pregnancy-related (or gestational) diabetes. Type 1 diabetes develops most often in children and young adults but can appear at any age. It is always treated with insulin. Type 2 diabetes is much more common and usually develops in adults. Type 2 diabetes is treated with diet, pills or injectable medications including insulin. Some women develop diabetes during pregnancy (called gestational diabetes). It usually goes away after the baby is born. However, women who have pregnancy-related diabetes are a higher risk for developing diabetes later in life.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES?

Symptoms of diabetes include tiredness, weight loss, frequent urination and/or increased thirst, blurred vision, frequent infections such as recurrent yeast infections in women, and slow healing of wounds. Often, there may be no symptoms. You can have diabetes even if you don't have any symptoms.

HOW DOES DIABETES AFFECT THE BODY?

Over time, high blood sugar that is left untreated may cause permanent damage to various organs of the body. Uncontrolled diabetes causes significant problems to the kidneys, eyes, nerves in your body and your heart. Very high blood sugar levels can lead to illness, and occasionally hospitalization.

WHAT CAN I DO TO CONTROL MY DIABETES?

To control diabetes, you must keep your blood sugar near normal. You and your family doctor will decide what your blood sugar goal should be, based on your attitude to change, your age, your social and family situations, and your other health problems. To control your blood sugar, you'll need to do several or all of the following:

- **Eat a wide variety of foods.** Choose low-fat foods. Spread your calories throughout your day (eat several mini-meals rather than three large meals. Avoid sugar, large amounts of carbohydrates (starches, grains), and sugary liquids like juice or soda.). A dietitian can help you.
- **Exercise regularly.** Choose your favorite exercise and do it three to four times a week. Just check with your doctor before you start any exercise program.
- **Take your medicine (either pills or insulin shots or both) exactly as your doctor tells you.** If you're not able or not willing to do what has been recommended, let your doctor know. Your doctor might be able to change your plan so it works for you.

OTHER THINGS TO DO ARE:

- **Keep your blood pressure low.** It is important to keep your blood pressure below 130/80. Talk with your doctor about your blood pressure. Have it checked several times a year, or monitor it regularly yourself. You should be even more careful about blood pressure than people who don't have diabetes.
- **Lower your blood cholesterol if it's high.** Check with your doctor to see what your cholesterol level should be. Your doctor can help you bring a high level into the normal range.
- **Don't smoke.** If you want to quit smoking, talk with your doctor about how to quit.
- **Get a dilated eye exam from an eye doctor at least once a year.** Eye doctors, or Ophthalmologists, can pick up diabetic eye disease before you notice it. Their monitoring and treatment can prevent serious eye problems from developing.
- **Ask your doctor to check your feet at every office visit.** Check your feet yourself every day. Wear shoes that fit well. It's important to avoid sores on your feet or walking barefooted.
- **Brush your teeth and floss them every day.** See your dentist once or twice a year.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DIABETES?

- Call 1-800-ADA-ORDER (1-800-232-6733) to learn more about American Diabetes Association publications.
- Call 1-800-806-7801 to join the American Diabetes Association. To find diabetes information on the World Wide Web, visit <http://www.diabetes.org>.

GENERAL RULES FOR A DIABETIC DIET

1. Keep your carbohydrate (starches like bread and pasta) intake low and spread throughout the day.
2. Fruits should be fresh or packed in water or own juice.
3. Limit sugary beverages like juice or soda.
4. Reduce the total amount of saturated fat in your diet. Remove excess fat from meat and poultry.
5. Avoid fried foods.
6. Use low fat dairy products, such as nonfat or 1% low fat milk.
7. If you take insulin, allow no more than 4-5 hours to pass between meals. Add a mid-morning snack or afternoon snack if the time between meals exceeds 4-5 hours.
8. Eat balanced meals. All meals should include fruits and vegetables, protein, with few carbohydrates and fat (mono- unsaturated preferably).
9. Bedtime snacks should include some protein and starch. (If snack is needed)
10. Eat at least three times a day. If you are taking insulin, include a bedtime snack.
11. Eat meals and/or snacks at approximately the same time each day.

Every day you should eat a variety of foods such as protein, starches, (breads, pasta, corn, potatoes, dried beans and peas), fruits and vegetables, and mono-unsaturated fats. Choose different foods in each group from day to day. When you eat the same foods every day, or a limited variety, you will not fill your nutritional needs.

The American Diabetic Association recommends you see a Registered Dietitian to individualize your meal plan needs.