



Diabetes

What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes mellitus is a condition in which the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high. Glucose comes from food and when we eat the level of glucose in the blood rises. Glucose levels are usually controlled by insulin which is made in the pancreas. The insulin moves the glucose from the blood into parts of the body that use it, such as the muscles. In someone with diabetes the pancreas either makes no insulin (type 1 diabetes) or doesn't make enough insulin and/or the cells in the body are not able to use the insulin properly (type 2 diabetes).

The Complications of Diabetes

People with diabetes are at greater risk of heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, blindness, nerve damage, serious foot problems and impotence. This is because too much sugar in the blood leads to narrowed arteries and poor circulation. The risk of developing complications is reduced if blood sugar levels are well controlled and other risk factors such as high blood pressure are dealt with.

Managing Diabetes

You may have to make some changes to your life to help keep your glucose levels under control, but if you have diabetes it doesn't have to rule your life. Many of the following recommendations below are advised for anyone trying to change to a healthier lifestyle. Enlist the support of friends and family and your healthcare team.

- Eat a healthy balanced diet including foods low in fat, high in fibre and plenty of starchy food, fruit and vegetables. Eat regularly. Special diabetic foods are not necessary.
- Exercise regularly. If you are able, a 30 minute brisk walk 5 times a week is advised.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. A healthy diet and regular exercise can help you achieve this.
- Stop smoking. If you are a smoker, give up now. It will reduce your health risks dramatically.
- Don't drink too much. Drink within recommended limits. Alcohol can cause hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)

Leaflets are available on the above subjects if you need more information

- Be prepared. Try to avoid hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) as much as possible as there is always a rebound effect. Hypos are caused by more medication, either tablets or insulin, than your body needs. If you are a diet controlled diabetic you

will not get hypos. Eat regular meals, have a snack before you exercise and make sure carbohydrate snacks or a sweet drink is available in the event of a hypo.

- Check your feet daily. Report any problems as soon as possible to your chiroprapist.

What Treatment to Expect

Regular checks with your healthcare team are essential to help manage your diabetes. Your doctor or nurse will work with you to help you in achieving your goals and also monitor for any early signs of the complications of diabetes. You can expect to receive the following treatment:

- Blood sugar tests. An Hba1c blood test will give you your average blood sugar level over 8 to 12 weeks. Based on the results of regular tests your doctor set targets for you and change your treatment if necessary.
- Eye screening. An ophthalmologist will check for damage to your eyes. Detecting and treating danger signals can prevent you from going blind.
- Kidney checks with a urine test. This looks for microscopic particles which can indicate early kidney problems.
- Blood pressure control is vital. Have your blood pressure checked regularly. You may need drugs to bring it down to the right level.
- Cholestrol should be measured by a blood test and, if necessary, you should reduce it by diet or tablets (or both) if it is greater than 5mmol/L (a measurement of how much cholestrol is in each litre of blood)
- Foot checks. Poor circulation or nerve damage caused by diabetes can lead to serious foot problems (the most severe leading to amputation) so be sure to have your feet checked.
- Advice on how to measure your own blood sugar. Some people with diabetes check their own blood sugar levels themselves using a machine called a glucometer. Blood sugar levels should ideally be between 4 and 7 mmol/L before meals and less than 10 mmol/L two hours after a meal. Your doctor or nurse can advise you on using a glucometer. Your healthcare team can also advise on diet, exercise, losing weight and how to avoid the long term complications of diabetes.

For more information, contact us:



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