

## PATIENT EDUCATION/SELF MANAGEMENT

# DIABETES: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

## WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is a disease that causes high amounts of glucose (sugar) in the blood. It is caused by the body not making enough insulin or not being able to use the insulin it has.

Diabetes can lead to serious health problems including:

- High blood pressure
- Eye/vision problems
- Kidney disease
- Digestive problems
- Amputation of toes or feet
- Heart attacks
- Strokes
- Nerve damage throughout your body
- Skin problems



## SYMPTOMS TO WATCH FOR IF YOU HAVE DIABETES

**High blood sugar (hyperglycemia) symptoms**

- Thirst
- Frequent urination
- Blurred vision



**What are the causes of high blood sugar?**

- Too much food
- Too little diabetes medicine
- Illness
- Stress

**Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) symptoms**

- Shakiness
- Nausea
- Drowsiness
- Hunger
- Headache
- Confusion



**What are the causes of low blood sugar?**

- Too little food
- Extra exercise
- Too much diabetes medicine or insulin

**What to do if you have symptoms of high blood sugar**

- Be sure to drink plenty of water
- Contact your health care team

**What to do if you have symptoms of low blood sugar**

- Eat or drink something with sugar in it
- Contact your health care team if you don't feel better in 15 minutes

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### DIABETES: WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

#### KNOW THE ABCS OF DIABETES:

# A

#### A1C

- The A1C is a blood test that measures your blood sugar level over the past three months.
- It is different from the blood sugar checks you do from your finger.
- A1C is usually less than 6.5% in people without diabetes. In people with diabetes the goal is an A1C less than 7-8% (your health care team will tell you what your personal A1C goal should be as the goal is different for different people).



# B

#### Blood pressure

- Blood pressure is the force of your blood against the walls of your blood vessels.
- If your blood pressure gets too high, it makes your heart work too hard.
- High blood pressure can cause a heart attack, kidney disease, or a stroke.
- Your blood pressure should be below 140/80 unless your health care provider tells you a different goal.
- Blood pressure control is important in diabetes. Be sure to have your blood pressure checked at every health care visit.



# C

#### Cholesterol (ko-LESS-tuh-ruh)

- Cholesterol is a chemical in your blood. LDL is the “bad” cholesterol that can build up and clog your blood vessels, which can cause a heart attack or stroke.
- Most people with diabetes are prescribed medication called “statins” to lower their “bad” cholesterol.
- Your health care provider will check your blood LDL-cholesterol level, often once a year, but sometimes less often if you are taking statin medication.

#### WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE DIABETES?

- Do not smoke.
- Take your medications as directed.
- Control your weight. The best way to maintain a good weight is to eat a healthy diet and exercise more.
  - ▶ Be active at least 30 minutes on most days. You can walk, jog, or do exercises in your cell, even during lockdowns.
  - ▶ Eat a healthy diet: limit breads and pastas, canteen-junk foods, candy, and ice cream.
- Try to lower stress levels.
- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling.
- Report any changes in your vision to your health care provider.
- Be sure to get regular check-ups.
- Talk to health care staff about when you should get lab tests including A1C, and when you should get foot, eye, dental, and EKG exams to monitor your condition.



#### BENEFITS OF EXERCISE IF YOU HAVE DIABETES

- Weight loss and maintenance of normal weight.
- A stronger, healthier heart.
- Improved sleep.
- Improved mood.
- Improved blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose levels.
- May help lower the amount of medication needed to control your blood sugar.



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### DIABETES: FOOT CARE

#### WHY IS FOOT CARE IMPORTANT?

Diabetes can cause you to lose feeling in your feet (feet are numb).

When you have numbness or can't feel your feet, they can get injured, often without you knowing it, from:

- something that breaks your skin (such as a cut)
- a deep wound (such as stepping on something sharp)
- walking barefoot on a hot surface
- constant pressure in one spot (from a tight shoe)



#### HOW DO I KEEP MY FEET HEALTHY?

- Check your feet every day.
  - ◆ Look for red spots, sores, infected toenails, swelling, cuts, and blisters.
- Wear shoes and socks at all times.
- Wear comfortable shoes that protect your feet and fit well.
- Protect your feet from hot and cold.
- Keep blood flowing to your feet.
  - ◆ Put your feet up when sitting.
  - ◆ Move your ankles and wiggle your toes throughout the day.
  - ◆ Do not cross your legs for long periods of time.
- Wash your feet every day.
  - ◆ Dry your feet carefully, especially between the toes.
- Keep the skin of your feet soft and smooth.
  - ◆ If you have lotion you can use a thin coat over the tops and bottoms of your feet, but not between your toes.
- Carefully trim your toenails regularly. Ask your health care team for assistance if needed.
- Take care of your diabetes.
  - ◆ Work with your health care provider to keep your blood sugar levels in your target range.
- Don't smoke.
- Be more active.



#### HOW DO I TREAT FOOT PROBLEMS?

- Talk to your health care provider if you have any foot problems.

