

Nutrition News

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A COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

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American Diabetes Month

November is American Diabetes Month. Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death from disease. One in four people in America have diabetes or are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

So what is diabetes?

Diabetes (or diabetes mellitus) is a metabolism disorder. Metabolism refers to the way our bodies turn the food that we eat into the nutrients we need for energy and growth. Most of what we eat is broken down into glucose. Glucose is a form of sugar in the blood and is the main source of fuel for our bodies.

A person with diabetes has a condition in which the amount of glucose in the blood is too high (hyperglycemia). This happens because the body either does not produce enough insulin, produces no insulin at all or the cells do not respond properly to insulin. Too much glucose building up in the blood can cause damage to the eyes, nerves, heart and kidneys. This excess blood glucose eventually passes out of the body into the urine.

There are three main types of diabetes.

Diabetes type 1: The body produces no insulin at all.

Diabetes type 2: The body does not produce enough insulin or the insulin is not working properly. It is the most common form of diabetes.

Gestational diabetes: Diabetes develops during pregnancy and usually goes away after the birth of the child. A woman who has had gestational diabetes, however, is more likely to develop type 2 diabetes later in life.

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes

The latest medical findings show that the chances of getting type 2 diabetes increase the more health risk factors you have.

Symptoms of Diabetes

Symptoms of diabetes often go unnoticed. Some diabetes symptoms include:

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Unusual weight loss
- Increased tiredness or fatigue
- Irritability
- Blurred vision

If you have one or more of these diabetes symptoms, see your doctor right away.

A family history of diabetes. If a parent or sibling in your family has diabetes, your risk of developing type 2 diabetes increases.

Over age 45. The chance of getting type 2 diabetes increases with age.

Race or ethnic background. The risk of type 2 diabetes is greater in Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders and Asians.

Metabolic syndrome. A person who has been diagnosed as having impaired glucose tolerance is at significantly higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Being overweight. If you are overweight, defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater than 25, you're at higher risk of type 2 diabetes.

Hypertension. Having blood pressure of 140/90 mm Hg or higher increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Abnormal cholesterol levels. HDL ("good") cholesterol levels under 35 mg/dL (milligrams per deciliter) and/or a triglyceride level over 250 mg/dL increases your risk of type 2 diabetes.

History of gestational diabetes. Getting diabetes during pregnancy or delivering a baby over 9 pounds can increase your risk of type 2 diabetes.

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Plan your food intake and control your diabetes

Three factors affect your blood glucose: what you eat, how much you eat and when you eat. Carbohydrates in food make blood glucose levels go up. Balancing carbohydrate intake with physical activity and medication or insulin is the key to managing diabetes.

Carbohydrates are found the following foods:

- Grains (breads, pasta, cereals, grits, hominy, oatmeal, rice, crackers)
- Starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn, winter squash)
- Beans and legumes (pinto, navy, lentils, kidney)
- Fruit and juice
- Dairy products (milk and yogurt)
- Sweets and snack foods (sodas, juice drinks, cakes, cookies, candy, chips)

Finding the balance for yourself is important so you can feel your best, do the things you enjoy, and lower your risk of complications. By planning your meals and eating the right amount of food, you can better control your blood glucose level. The American Diabetes Association recommends three easy methods for planning meals to control your blood glucose level. Use one method or a combination of all three to help you moderate your carbohydrate intake as well as to eat balanced and healthy meals.

Plate method

No tools or carbohydrate counting are needed. Try these 7 simple steps to get started:

1. Draw a line down the middle of your dinner plate.
2. On one side, cut it again so you will have 3 sections on your plate.
3. Fill the largest section with nonstarchy vegetables.
4. In one of the small sections, add one starchy food.
5. On the other small section, place your lean meat, fish, poultry or meat substitute.

6. Add an 8-ounce glass of nonfat or low-fat milk. If you don't drink milk, add another small serving of carb, such as a 6-ounce container of light yogurt or a small roll.
7. Add a piece of fruit or a 1/2 cup fruit salad.

Carbohydrate counting

Begin with 45-60 grams of carbohydrates per meal. You may need more or less carbohydrate at meals depending on how you manage your diabetes. You and your doctor and dietitian can figure out the right amount for you. Once you know how many grams of carbohydrates you should eat at each meal, choose your food and the portion size to match.

Glycemic index

The amount and type of carbohydrate affects blood glucose levels. The glycemic index, or GI, measures how a carbohydrate-containing food raises blood glucose. Foods are ranked based on how they compare to either glucose or white bread. A food with a high GI raises blood glucose more than a food with a medium or low GI. Check with your doctor or dietitian about which foods have a high or low GI.

It is also a good idea to follow the recommendations for a healthy diet using the USDA MyPyramid. Go to www.MyPyramid.gov to get more information on planning balanced meals.

Preventing Complications

Besides eating a healthy, balanced diet, getting regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight to help control your blood glucose level, here are some tips for preventing complications:

- ♥ Keep your blood pressure under 130/85 mm Hg.
- ♥ Keep your cholesterol level below 200 mg.
- ♥ Check your feet every day for signs of infection.
- ♥ Get your eyes checked once a year.
- ♥ Have your dentist check your teeth and gums twice a year.

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To find out more, contact your parish agent.