



Diabetes Awareness and Management

Summary

Diabetes is a common and serious health condition. Diabetes can be controlled. Many people do not know that they have diabetes. With proper care, people with diabetes can enjoy good health now and in the future.

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Publications from Kansas State University are available on the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu>

Reviewed by Connie Crawley, M.S., R.D., L.D.
Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist, Department of Food and Nutrition, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

The information in this fact sheet is for educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from your health care provider.

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Mary L. Meck Higgins, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., CDE, *Diabetes Awareness and Management*, Kansas State University, October 2000.

Kansas State University
Agricultural Experiment Station
and Cooperative Extension Service

MF-2478

October 2000

It is the policy of Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service that all persons shall have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and materials without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability. Kansas State University is an equal opportunity organization. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Marc A. Johnson, Director.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is an illness in which blood sugar is too high because the body either does not make insulin or does not respond to insulin properly. (**Insulin** is a hormone produced by the pancreas that helps convert food into energy.) Diabetes has no cure, but it can be controlled. Good **diabetes control** means that most of the time, blood sugar levels stay close to the levels that are found in people without diabetes. There are several kinds of diabetes. All forms of diabetes can lead to serious health problems if not controlled. By managing their diabetes, people can feel better and lower their chances for serious health problems later on.

With uncontrolled diabetes, sugar (also called **glucose**) builds up in the blood instead of getting into the body's cells. High blood sugar, or **hyperglycemia**, is toxic to cells over a period of time, and can cause serious medical problems, or **diabetes complications**. Blindness, nerve damage, amputations, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke and other sometimes fatal conditions can develop. If blood sugar is too low, known as **hypoglycemia**, immediate serious health problems, and even death, can occur. The death rate for middle-aged people with diabetes is twice as high as for those without diabetes. Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States, and in Kansas. Diabetes is one of the most severe and costly health challenges facing Americans. Insurance companies often help pay for part of the cost of medications, supplies and diabetes education programs.

People who keep their diabetes controlled have fewer health problems. They can expect to live a long and active life.

Will You Get Diabetes?

In the United States, about two out of 25 over age 20 have diabetes. About one out of six older adults have diabetes. Studies show that only two-thirds of the people who have diabetes know that they have it. The other one-third who have diabetes have not been diagnosed.

Preventing diabetes, or finding out you have it as soon as possible if you do get it, gives you the best chance to enjoy good health. Many people have diabetes for years before they are diagnosed with it. Some people who have been diagnosed with diabetes did not feel sick or have any of the common symptoms of diabetes.

Are You at Risk for Diabetes?

Check the risk factors that describe you.

- ☐ being overweight
- ☐ getting little or no exercise each day
- ☐ being older than age 45 and especially older than age 65. Adults who are 65 and older are about three times more likely to have diabetes than people younger than 45.
- ☐ having a parent, brother or sister with diabetes
- ☐ for women, having had diabetes when you were pregnant

Certain ethnic groups have a much higher rate of diabetes, including:

- Native Americans
- Native Alaskans
- Native Hawaiians
- Latinos
- African-Americans
- Asian-Americans

People in these groups are 1.5 to 3 times more likely to get diabetes than are non-Hispanic whites of a similar age.

Are you in one of the ethnic groups at high risk for diabetes? _____

Do You Have Symptoms of Diabetes?

Common symptoms of diabetes are shown below. The first letters spell out the words **DIABETES** and **CAUTION**, to help you remember the warning signs of diabetes. Circle symptoms that you have.

Drowsiness

Itching

A family history of diabetes

Blurred vision

Excessive weight

Tingling, numbness or pain in hands or feet

Easy fatigue - feeling tired

Skin infections or slow healing of cuts and scratches, especially on the feet

Constant urination or going to the bathroom often

Abnormal thirst

Unusual hunger

The rapid loss of weight

Irritability or being grumpy

Obvious weakness

Nausea and vomiting

If you have risk factors or symptoms of diabetes, have you ever talked with your health-care provider about it? _____

If not, do it soon. It is easy to be tested for diabetes.

Help someone you love learn if they are at risk for diabetes. Tell them to ask their doctor about getting tested for diabetes.

Diabetes Treatment

The main goal of diabetes treatment is to keep blood sugar levels within a normal range most of the time. Treatment advice is individualized according to the needs of the person. Many ways of treating diabetes are effective. For example, a variety of good diet and exercise plans, oral medications, insulin-injection schedules, and blood sugar meters are available.

Diabetes is a **chronic condition** since it is an illness that will not go away. People with diabetes must learn to live with it and manage it throughout each day. Most diabetes care happens as choices are made each day about diet, exercise, medication, and other daily habits. The person with diabetes needs to learn how to make these care choices, with help from family members and friends, based on advice from their health-care partners, in order to reduce medical problems caused by diabetes. This is called **diabetes self-management**.

If you have diabetes, putting knowledge into action each day by making choices about treatment plans and lifestyle options is not always easy to do. It involves skill in doing certain behaviors (for example, estimating food portion sizes), as well as setting realistic goals, learning how to do diabetes problem-solving, and taking a positive approach to diabetes-related situations. But you can do it. Talk with your health-care partners about how you feel. Ask questions.

Diabetes researchers have proven that keeping blood sugar levels as close to normal as possible makes a big difference in lowering risk for health problems, now and in the future. If you have diabetes, controlling your blood sugar can help you have more energy and feel better. If a problem does get started, good diabetes care will help stop it from getting worse. In two national studies, when blood sugars were kept under better control, health problems in the eyes, nerves, kidneys, and in the heart were drastically reduced, compared to diabetic people who usually had higher blood sugar levels.

People who take care of their diabetes can expect to live a long and active life.

Knowledge, Then Action! What You Can Do

Diabetes lifestyle care choices are important. They include: nutrition, exercise, diabetes medication, blood sugar monitoring, personal health habits, and frequent medical checkups.

Nutrition

Good nutrition involves following a **diabetes meal plan** that shows what, when and how much to eat. Using a diabetes meal plan helps blood sugar levels stay as close to normal as possible. The plan needs to be personalized to also provide for enjoyment of meals and overall good health. Do not skip meals. Rather, eat several times every day according to your diabetes meal plan, and use the Food Guide Pyramid and Dietary Guidelines for Americans to help you choose your meals and snacks. If you are overweight, try to lose 10 or 15 pounds in order to help improve your diabetes control.

Exercise

Exercise helps control body weight, high blood sugar levels and stress. By working with their health-care partners to set exercise goals, people with diabetes can learn how to adjust their physical activity to take care of their diabetes. Your **diabetes exercise plan** should show you whether you need to check your blood sugar or have a snack before you exercise, as well as the best kinds of physical activity to do, the frequency and intensity of exercise, and amount of time to exercise each week.

Diabetes Medication

In addition to diet and exercise, medication can help control diabetes. People who get diabetes as a child or young adult often require insulin shots for treatment of their diabetes. Some people can take diabetes pills instead of insulin shots to help keep their blood sugar down. You must balance your diabetes medication with your food and exercise throughout the day. If you take diabetes medicine, follow the instructions your doctor gives you. Also, learn what to do if your blood sugar goes too low too fast, and tell your family and friends how to help you if you should need their assistance.

Blood Sugar Monitoring

Blood sugar monitoring is a way for people with diabetes to check their blood sugar levels. There are many types of blood sugar meters and methods of using them. Knowing your blood sugar results can help you adjust your daily diabetes care choices about meals or exercise. For example, if blood sugars at bedtime are low, a snack may be necessary. If they are high before lunch, going for a walk might be advised. Personal advice from the health-care team is needed to set goals for blood sugars. If blood sugar levels are not usually in the goal range, ask for help from a health-care team member about how to get better results. If you are sick, check your blood sugar more often and call your health-care team if it stays too high.

Personal Health Habits

People with diabetes can develop many personal health habits to manage their diabetes better. For example, practicing simple ways to care for skin, feet and teeth reduces the chances of diabetes complications. Avoiding smoking, alcohol and drug abuse is even more important for people with diabetes than for the general public.

Frequent Medical Checkups

Frequent diabetes checkups with a health-care team are very important. Regular medical care will allow for prevention or early treatment of health problems. If you have diabetes, follow treatment plans for how to take care of yourself during illness. Treat other medical conditions you have, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels, to prevent a crisis from developing.

Diabetes Resources

Adapting one's life each day in order to control a chronic disease such as diabetes can be difficult and stressful. Anxiety about, and coping with, diabetes complications can require special help. People with diabetes can learn to recruit family members, friends and others to assist them. Sometimes people need help with getting to the clinic or paying their bills. Knowing how and when to seek help is important. Talk about it with your health-care team.

Diabetes care partners include doctors who specialize in treating diabetes, diabetes educators, general practice doctors, nurses, dietitians, social workers, pharmacists, exercise trainers, vision specialists, foot specialists, mental health counselors, home health-care providers and others.

Printed materials, audiotapes, videos and other diabetes information, such as cookbooks or exercise plans, can be obtained. Ask for help from a diabetes organization, diabetes support group, senior center, local Research and Extension service staff, county health department, hospital, pharmacy or clinic.

Managing diabetes well challenges people with diabetes and their family, friends and health-care team. Control diabetes — for life!

Sources for More Information

For clickable Internet links, to all of the other resources mentioned in the leader's guide and below, go to: www.oznet.ksu.edu/ext_f&n/NUTLINK/pages/DIABETES.HTM

National Diabetes Education Program. Their telephone number is 1-800-438-5383. Their web address is: www.niddk.nih.gov/health/diabetes/diabetes.htm#pubs

The American Diabetes Association's telephone number is 1-800-DIABETES. (1-800-342-2383)
The web address is: www.diabetes.org/ada/diabetesinfo.asp

A nutrition and diabetes resource list for consumers who have diabetes can be found at: www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/bibs/topics/diabetes/diabetes.html

To take a simple seven-question diabetes risk test, go to: www.diabetes.org/ada/risktext.asp

Other diabetes-related K-State Research and Extension Publications can be found at: www.oznet.ksu.edu

Take Charge of Your Diabetes, Center for Disease Control, Division of Diabetes Translation. Their telephone number is 1-877-232-3422. You can print a copy of the book from their web address: www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/tcyd.htm

References

A Core Curriculum for Diabetes Education. 1998. By Martha Mitchell Funnell, Cheryl Hunt, Karmeen Kulkarni, Richard R. Rubin, and Peggy C. Yarborough. American Association of Diabetes Educators, Chicago, IL.

Your County _____

Today's Date _____

Diabetes Awareness and Management Lesson Survey Questions

Instructions for participants: Please answer the following questions, even if you do not have diabetes yourself. Completing it is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question. You will not be identified with your answers in any way.

1. Do you believe that the following statement is true?

“People can have diabetes for several years before finding out that they have it.”

Check One. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Before this program, did you believe the statement?

Check One. ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. How do you feel about the following statement?

“If I had risk factors or symptoms of diabetes, I would ask to be tested for it.”

Check one. ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Disagree

Before this program, how did you feel about the statement?

Check one. ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Disagree

3. How do you feel about the following statement?

“There is not much that a person with diabetes can do to control his or her blood sugar and prevent long-term diabetes complications.”

Check one. ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Disagree

Before this program, how did you feel about the statement?

Check one. ☐ Agree ☐ Somewhat Agree ☐ Somewhat Disagree ☐ Disagree

4. After today, do you intend to make the following changes to reduce your risk factors for diabetes?

Check those that apply.

☐ If overweight, lose 10 or 15 pounds.

☐ If little or no exercise, increase physical activity.

Before this program, did you intend to make the following changes?

Check those that apply.

☐ If overweight, lose 10 or 15 pounds.

☐ If little or no exercise, increase physical activity.

5. If you have diabetes: After today, how often do you plan to test your blood sugar? *If you do not have diabetes, please go to question 6.*

_____ I do not plan to test my blood sugar

_____ Once a day

_____ Other _____

If you have diabetes: Before this program, how often did you test your blood sugar?

Check one.

_____ I did not test my blood sugar

_____ Once a day

_____ Other _____

6. Please answer the following questions about you.

a. Do you have diabetes?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know

b. Are You:

_____ Male _____ Female

c. Are You:

_____ White/non-Hispanic

_____ White/Hispanic Heritage

_____ African-American/Black

_____ Asian-American

_____ Native -American/American Indian

_____ Other

d. Are you age 60 years or over?

_____ Yes _____ No

7. What did you learn that you did not know or that surprised you?

Thank you! Separate this survey and give it to your class leader. The information you provided will help us to improve diabetes and nutrition education.

For Leader's Only:

Leader's Name _____ Leader's Phone Number _____

Type of Meeting _____

Number of People attending _____ Number of Men _____ Number of Women _____

Please return completed surveys to your county Family and Consumer Science agent, or mail directly to:

Mary Higgins
Kansas State University
202 Justin Hall
Manhattan, Kansas 66506