

Patient Education



Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic condition that can affect both the young and the old. There are two main types of diabetes – Type 2 is the most common. Diabetes is a disease resulting from either a direct lack of the hormone insulin or an increased resistance by the body to its action, or both. Insulin is a hormone that helps our body convert the food we eat into energy for our body.

Self Care Tips:

Meal Planning – For the management of diabetes, the “Good Health Eating Guide” is often used to help the individual with diabetes eat a healthy balanced diet. This guide helps to balance blood glucose by showing you how to provide your body with about equal amounts of carbohydrates with each meal.

- Carbohydrates = One of the main forms of energy that we receive and our bodies use as a “fuel”. We get carbohydrates from foods such as bread, cereal and grains, most fruits and some vegetables, milk products and from simple sugars such as table sugar, syrups and honey. *How it works:* When carbohydrates are digested by the body, they turn into an energy source called “glucose” (blood glucose). Depending on the type of carbohydrate, it can be a fast or slow sugar.
- Fast sugars = Juices, regular pop, milk products and simple sugars that have little to no fibre in them. They are absorbed into the blood stream rapidly, raising the blood glucose level. The more fibre in the food, the longer it takes the body to digest it.
- Slower sugars = Whole grains, whole fruits digest more slowly and are turned into glucose and our blood glucose level rises more slowly after each meal. By choosing these foods it enables us to have a steady blood glucose level from one meal to the next.
- Protein and Fats Groups: Protein and fats are not carbohydrates and they do not raise our blood glucose level. They play an important role in diabetes management. They give us important nutrients that can’t be found in other foods. When protein is eaten along with carbohydrates at a meal, they help to slow the digestion of the carbohydrates, giving us a slow and steady release of glucose into the blood stream – this helps to control the sudden surge in our blood glucose level after eating a meal.

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Diabetes - Basic eating guidelines

Eat three meals per day (including breakfast).

- ✓ Space meals out about a minimum four hours, but no longer than six hours apart from the previous meal.
- ✓ Eat something from at least three of the four food groups at each meal.

4 main food groups:

1. **Starchy foods** – such as bread, cereals, potatoes, corn and rice.
2. **Fruits and vegetables** – such as carrots, peas, apples, bananas.
3. **Milk and milk products**
4. **Protein** – such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs, peanut butter, hard cheese.

Each meal should contain:

- a) A choice from the “Starchy foods” – try to choose whole grain breads and cereals more often.
- b) A “Protein” choice. Remember this food group helps to slow down how fast carbohydrates are turned into blood glucose.
- c) Choose portion sizes that help you reach or maintain a healthy body weight.

Activity

Regular physical exercise is a very important part of diabetes management.

- ✓ Exercising 5 times a week for half an hour help to burn off excess glucose in our blood. This in turn lowers our blood glucose levels; the effects can last up to 24 hours.
- ✓ Exercise helps you maintain or achieve a healthy weight.
- ✓ Exercise does not need to be strenuous or difficult. Simply walking or swimming is an excellent way of keeping fit and controlling your diabetes.
- ✓ **It is very important that before you start a new exercise program you make sure that it is okay with your family doctor.** Some individuals may have other health problems that may interfere with the benefits of regular exercise.

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Medications

Some of those with diabetes can control their blood glucose through the foods that they eat, regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight.

Others may also take medications including pills and/or insulin injections. Having to take medications does not mean you have a more severe case of diabetes.

Remember that everyone is an individual where individualized treatment plans will be made for each, whether the plan includes medications or not.

Your doctor, dietitian and diabetes educator will help you to decide what the best treatment plan is for you.

- ✓ **Take your medication(s)** as prescribed by your doctor.
- ✓ **Develop a routine** to help you remember to take your medications. Most medications are meant to be taken at approximately the same time each day.
- ✓ **Speak with your doctor or pharmacist** as to when the best time is to take your medications. Some diabetes medications are meant to be taken before meals and some are to be taken with meals.
- ✓ **Carry with you an up-to-date record of all of your medications** that you are taking. Ensure you know the correct dosage and how often you take them – don't forget to add allergies!
- ✓ **Wearing a Medic Alert bracelet is strongly recommended.** The bracelet gives any health care provider up-to-date information regarding all health care problems, medications and allergies. It can also tell a provider who to contact in an emergency.

How to monitor your blood sugar

Regular monitoring can give you an accurate idea of how well your diabetes is being controlled - It can also help to motivate you when you can see all of your hard work is paying off!

- ✓ Talk to your doctor or diabetes educator as to whether you should be testing your blood glucose. They can also help you to decide when and how often you should test.
 - ✓ Monitoring is very useful and important in the treatment and recognition of both high and low blood sugars.
 - ✓ Your diabetes educator can teach you how to do an accurate test along with the care and cleaning of your meter.
- **The normal blood glucose range before meals = in the 4-7mmol/l range**
*Approximately 2 hours after eating we expect our blood glucose to be in the 5-10mmol/l range.
 - If your readings are consistently out of these ranges speak to your doctor or diabetes educator for advice.

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Call your Doctor or Diabetes Educator if you notice any of the following signs and symptoms:

- Increased number (more than 2-3 per week) of low blood glucose results.
- Unexplained blood glucose of less than 2.9mmol/l.
- Vomiting, diarrhea or high fever for more than 24 hours.
- Unexplained blood glucose greater than 20mmol/l for more than 48 hours.
- Signs of low blood glucose including shakiness, dizziness, tiredness, sweating, hunger, confusion, slurred speech, irritability.
- Signs of high blood glucose including frequent urination, increased thirst, tiredness, blurry vision, increased number of infections or delayed healing.
- Signs and symptoms of an infection, including fever and chills, redness, warmth of effected area, discharge.
- An open wound that is not healing.

For further information about managing your diabetes:

Please speak with your dietitian or diabetes nurse educator. They can create a customized diabetes treatment plan that suits you and your lifestyle.

Contact WPSHC's Diabetes Education Centre (DEC) at (705) 746-4540 extension 1318 for Dietitian and 1320 for Nurse.

The information in this handout was adapted from the VON SUDBURY Client Teaching Guide.

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