

## **Take Control of Your Diabetes**

### **10 Tips to help you manage your disease & live a healthy life**

According to the American Diabetes Association, there are 23.6 million children and adults in the U.S. with diabetes or “sugar diabetes.” If you have diabetes, it is very important that you take control of your disease. Many people with diabetes have health problems or other risk factors, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which may increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, blindness and kidney failure.

Diabetes affects almost every part of your body. So, to stay healthy, you should see your doctor at least twice a year (or as often as your doctor recommends) and members of your health care “team” regularly. This team may include dietitians (experts in nutrition), eye doctors, foot specialists, dentists and other health care providers. Between visits, you can prevent problems by:

- 1. Quitting Smoking.** Smoking raises your blood sugar level...making it harder to control your diabetes.
- 2. Getting a hemoglobin A1C test (long-term blood sugar control test) every 3-6 months.** Every percentage point drop in your A1C blood test results (less than 7.0% is the best) can reduce your chance of getting eye, kidney and nerve diseases by 40%.
- 3. Using your insulin and/or medicines as prescribed.** Before you take *any* non-prescription medications, vitamins or herbal remedies, check with your pharmacist or doctor.
- 4. Following your meal plan.** As your doctor or dietitian has suggested, you should eat lots of different foods that are high in fiber but low in fat and salt, and watch how much you are eating.
- 5. Getting your LDL cholesterol checked every year.** Try for less than 100mg/dl of this n “bad cholesterol.”
- 6. Having an eye exam every 1-2 years.** Your eye doctor will need to puts drops in your eyes, so she can see if the tiny blood vessels in the back of your eyes are damaged.
- 7. Checking your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots and swelling.** Call your doctor right away if you have sores that do not get better.
- 8. Having your blood pressure measured each doctor’s visit.** Blood pressure control reduces your risk of heart disease, stroke and other diseases.

**9. Getting your flu and pneumonia shots.** People with diabetes are more likely to die from pneumonia or flu than other people.

**10. Being active.** Exercising every day can help you reach a healthy weight. Talk to your doctor before you start an exercise program.

The more you know about diabetes, the better you will be able to deal with your disease.

#### **YOUR FOLLOW-UP VISIT MAY INCLUDE:**

##### **A physical examination**

Your doctor may check your weight and blood pressure, and inspect your eyes and feet.

##### **Taking your medical history**

The doctor may ask you about the times you've had high or low blood glucose (sugar) levels. He may want to see your blood glucose records. Also, be ready to talk about changes you've made to your diabetes care plan, any problems you've had following the care plan and any warning signs you've had that could mean that you are getting a complication (another disease or disorder you get because of your diabetes.) Your doctor will want to know if you've been sick since your last visit, which medicines you are taking and if your life has changed in any way.

##### **Laboratory tests**

Tests include a hemoglobin A1C (to check glucose control over the past 60 days), collecting a urine sample to look for protein, and taking a sample of your blood for cholesterol and blood fat tests.

##### **Reviewing your treatment plan**

And finally, your doctor will want to see how you're doing in meeting your goals, so he can see where, if at all, you are having problems.

**This article was submitted by iCare - Independent Care Health Plan as part of its commitment to serving the health care needs of the Southeast Wisconsin community. Independent Care is a 2009 Special Olympics Area Games Sponsor. Stop by the iCare booth to obtain free health screenings for blood pressure and glucose, and obtain information on the health care benefits offered by iCare.**