Diabetes: Don’t Sugarcoat It

There’s a good chance you or someone you know has diabetes, but what exactly does being diabetic mean? Put simply, diabetes is a condition that occurs when blood sugar—formally called blood glucose—is consistently too high.

Setting The Record Straight
People occasionally say they have “just a touch of sugar,” “borderline diabetes” or are only “a little” diabetic. The reality is, there’s no in between with diabetes - you either have it or you don’t.

That doesn’t mean you’re in the clear if you aren’t diabetic, but there’s a cutoff doctors use for the diagnosis. There’s also a misconception that diabetes isn’t that serious of a disease. In reality, it leads to more deaths every year than breast cancer and AIDS combined. On top of that, it almost doubles the risk of heart attack. Whether insulin is prescribed or not, diabetes is “serious.”

With that said, there is a term that’s increasingly used to describe individuals who routinely have higher than normal blood sugar levels, but not high enough to warrant a diabetes diagnosis. Does the word prediabetes ring a bell? Look for more on that in next month’s newsletter.

Definition: Diabetes is also known as diabetes mellitus. In Greek, diabetes means “to pass through” and in Latin, mellitus means “sugar.”
Why is There Sugar in My Blood?

The short answer has to do with digestion. After food makes it to the stomach and intestines, it is broken down into proteins, fats and carbohydrates and later, even simpler compounds that the body can absorb. One of those simple compounds is a sugar called glucose.

Glucose in the body is sort of like gasoline in a car—both are a source of fuel, but they aren’t good for much without a key.

Enter insulin. Just as turning a key in the ignition allows gasoline to be converted to energy, insulin—a hormone made by the pancreas—tells glucose to move out of the bloodstream and into cells, where it can be used for energy.

It’s not fair to put all the blame on diets high in sugar. There’s much more to it.

Some cases of diabetes are the result of not enough insulin being produced (Type 1 diabetes), while others develop when the body is unable to efficiently use the insulin it does make (Type 2 diabetes). In either case, glucose stays in the bloodstream—where it doesn’t belong.

Type 1 or Type 2 Diabetes: Which is It?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Usually before age 20 but can occur in adults</td>
<td>Usually begins after age 40 but can occur earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>Sudden</td>
<td>Gradual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>Majority experience weight loss and are thin</td>
<td>Majority are overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulin</td>
<td>Little or no insulin is produced by the pancreas</td>
<td>The pancreas produces insulin, but it may not be enough or it cannot be used by the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>Insulin, healthy diet, exercise, self-management, and when needed, oral medication and/or insulin</td>
<td>Healthy diet, exercise, self-management, and when needed, oral medication and/or insulin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions, Fourth Edition. 2012.

Resources:
Berry, Berry Good

Berries are a slam dunk in terms of nutrition—they’re a good source of fiber, vitamins and minerals, and are low in carbohydrates compared to other fruit. An added bonus this time of year is that they are in season, which is good news for affordability and flavor. Here are a few ways to enjoy them this summer:

Peanut Butter and Berry Toast: Move over peanut butter and jelly...breakfast just got more nutritious! Top a slice of whole wheat toast with a thin layer of peanut butter and a couple sliced up strawberries.

Frozen and Thawed: Sprinkle a handful of frozen berries over a bowl of your favorite yogurt—or in a bowl all by themselves. Leave in the refrigerator overnight. They’ll be wonderfully juicy by morning.

For Dessert: Every so often, swap out your usual post-dinner treat with a single serving of raspberries, blackberries or blueberries. They have much more nutrition and fewer carbohydrates than the average dessert.

The Truth About Fruit

It’s a common misconception that everything from apples to watermelon is off limits for people with prediabetes and diabetes. The reality is, a single serving of fruit can fit into a healthy eating plan for anyone keeping tabs on blood sugar.

What’s a serving?

It’s smaller than you might think. A serving is the amount of fresh, frozen, or canned fruit that contains 15 grams of carbohydrates. The following are some examples of a serving of fruit.

- 1/2 medium apple or orange
- 3/4 cup to 1 cup berries
- 1/2 cup frozen or canned fruit
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup 100% juice
- 1 cup cubed melon

Did you know? Most medium to large bananas count as two servings of fruit. Cut one in half and save the rest in an airtight container or plastic bag.

Sylvia Heimdal finds food labels helpful when grocery shopping.

Like clockwork on the day of the Fresh Conversations meeting, Sylvia Heimdal excitedly asks, “What are we talking about this month?” She enjoys the newness of it all: new foods, new recipes and new, healthy behaviors.

As grandmother to a child with food allergies, Sylvia has appreciated the recent focus on food labels. She was already a label reader but now has extra tools to help her choose wisely at the grocery store. She looks for items with no added sugar and also scopes out the lowest sodium option for blood pressure control.

Sylvia participates in an exercise class right before the monthly Fresh Conversations gathering and has recruited more than one workout buddy to join in on the fun at Lake Mills. She is quick to share that Fresh Conversations is a great place to try new things, and many have taken her up on the invitation.
News You Can Use

New research published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* is shining an even bigger spotlight on the dangers of sitting and the importance of moving frequently throughout the day. The study found moving in small chunks—even as short as 5 minutes—throughout the day matters more than structured exercise. In the study, individuals who sat for less than 30 minutes at a time had the lowest risk for an early death.

*What’s the takeaway?* For every half hour you spend seated, stand up and move for five minutes or more.


Is Limiting Carbs the Key?

Carbohydrates are only part of the puzzle. What really matters is eating a variety of healthy foods in controlled portions. Remember MyPlate? A balanced approach to eating, along with regular movement is your best defense against high blood sugar and other conditions like heart disease and stroke.

Thankfully, this isn’t anything new. Eating nutrient-rich foods and limiting sodium and saturated fat are good practice not just for those with diabetes. It’s good for everyone.

Word Scramble

Unscramble these words related to this month’s topics.

1. DREBEPIATSE
   ________________________________

2. DOBOL CLUOGES
   ________________________________

3. BRESIRE
   ________________________________

4. TOVENMEM
   ________________________________

5. TABRECHORYADS
   ________________________________

6. GRIVENS
   ________________________________

7. LUSININ
   ________________________________

8. BOLDO UGRAS VELEL
   ________________________________

Take Action Corner

This month I will...

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