

## Understand Diabetes and Take Control

November 14<sup>th</sup> may not ring a bell as a familiar holiday but it holds great importance for many people. Since 1991 November 14<sup>th</sup> celebrates World Diabetes Day (WDD). This official United Nations Day was organized to draw attention to the increased health risks diabetes is creating world wide. For the next five years, this campaign is shining attention on the growing need for diabetes education and prevention. The 2009 slogan is "Understand Diabetes and Take Control." What exactly does this slogan mean to you?

### Key Messages for WDD 2009

#### **KNOW: Diabetes Risk Factors & Warning Signs**

An estimated 300 million people world-wide are at risk for type 2 diabetes and 250 million have been diagnosed. Are you at risk? Do you currently have any symptoms of diabetes?

#### **Type 2 Diabetes Risk Factors:**

- Obesity and Overweight
- Lack of exercise
- Previously identified glucose intolerance
- Over 45 years of age
- High blood pressure and cholesterol
- History of gestational diabetes
- Ethnicity: Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous peoples, and African Americans

#### **Warning Signs of Diabetes:**

- Excessive thirst and urination
- Increased hunger
- Unintentional weight loss
- Tiredness
- Tingling in hands and feet
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing wounds
- Frequent infections

#### **KNOW: How to Respond & Who to Turn to**

If you think you have diabetes, it is important to see your doctor. Your doctor may diagnosis you by obtaining blood work. If you are diagnosed with diabetes, you are not on your own. It is important for anyone with diabetes to have a support network. A support network includes those who will help you learn how to manage your disease. A support network should include your doctor, a diabetes educator and dietitian, your pharmacist, and your family and friends. Diabetes is a self-managed disease, meaning the patient will have to deliver 95% of their own care. In order to do so, you must be educated on the proper diabetes care by qualified health professionals.

If you have been told that you are at risk for diabetes or you have pre-diabetes, the time to act is now! Today, we have solid research showing us that the best way to prevent diabetes is by making serious lifestyle changes. For example, if you are overweight or obese, your best treatment for pre-diabetes is to lose 7-10% of your body weight (14-20 pounds for someone that is 5' 10", weighs 200 pounds). In addition to weight loss, you should strive to exercise at least 150 minutes per week.

#### **KNOW: How to Manage Diabetes & Take Control**

The first step of managing diabetes is to become educated. It is vital for every person with diabetes to meet with a diabetes educator and a dietitian. These professionals can meet with you one on one or in a class setting to teach you and your family members how to care for diabetes. Diabetes educators and dietitians can be found in various locations within your community. Often your local hospital will offer diabetes education. You may

also ask your doctor where he/she suggests you obtain education. Another option is to contact your local ADA (American Diabetes Association) branch and they will be able to direct you to education opportunities in your local area.

The three main components of diabetes management include diet, exercise and medication. Each individual component alone is unable to control diabetes.

### Diet

A healthy diet is vital to good blood sugar control and good health. There many diets that are promoted today by the media, the internet, or friends and neighbors. In order to know which diet is right for you, set up an appointment with a registered dietitian. He/she will be able to look at all your health conditions, blood work, your food likes/dislikes, your schedule, and your medications to teach you about the diet plan that is best for you. The current American Diabetes Association diet recommendations include:

- Consume a balance diet including carbohydrates from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and low-fat dairy.
- Limit saturated fat intake and minimize trans fat intake.
- A low-carbohydrate or low-fat, calorie-restricted diet can be utilized for weight loss in the short-term.
- If following a low-carbohydrate diet, kidney function, lipid levels, and protein intake needs to be monitored by a health professional.
- Monitoring carbohydrate intake is a key strategy for obtaining glucose control.
- Patients should consume high-fiber foods and strive to consume at least 14 g fiber/1,000 calories.
- There is not enough evidence to prove that glycemic index/load diets reduce diabetes risks.
- The glycemic index/load can provide a modest,



added benefit when the patient is also monitoring carbohydrate intake.

Adapted from the ADA. Nutrition Recommendations and Interventions for Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2008; 31 (suppl 1): S61-S78.

### Exercise

Exercise is also a vital component to diabetes control and prevention. Strive to obtain 30 minutes of regular exercise each day. This may include walking, biking, swimming, or any other activity you enjoy. If you have limited mobility, consider a chair exercise program or marching in place during the commercial breaks. The important thing is to find an exercise that works for you and make it a priority. If you intend to start a new exercise program, always obtain clearance from your doctor before starting.

### Medication

Some people are able to control diabetes with diet and exercise alone. However, if medication is necessary, your doctor will give you a prescription. It will be your responsibility to take these medications as prescribed and to report any side effects that you might experience. There are many different types of medications used to treat diabetes including oral medications, medications that are injected, such as insulin. You may need one or more of these medications. Your medication needs may also change over time. You may also need medications to help control blood pressure or cholesterol. Blood pressure and cholesterol control are important to your overall health as a diabetic. If you have questions about your diabetes medications you can speak with your pharmacist, diabetes educator, or physician.

**To learn more about diabetes care and management, contact a registered dietitian at**

UPMC Presbyterian: 412.692.4497

UPMC Shadyside: 412.623.2431

UPMC Mercy South Side: 412.488.5687