

What you should know about DIABETES?

According to recent studies, diabetes is becoming a serious threat to the health of millions of Americans. It is a disease that is growing in numbers, showing up in greater numbers of younger patients than ever before and has an impact on young and old that is viewed by many public health officials as approaching crisis proportion. Diabetes is a serious, lifelong condition that can be managed through diet and exercise, but if not treated will lead to eye disease, kidney problems, dental disease, heart and blood vessel problems, nerve damage and foot problems.

Diabetes allows excess sugar to build up in the blood due to a failure of the pancreas to produce or utilize insulin effectively. Signs and symptoms of the disease include increased thirst, frequent urination, blurry vision, feeling tired, weight loss, dry skin, sores that don't heal, frequent infections, numbness or tingling in the feet and/or vomiting. There are two types of diabetes: **Type 1**, usually diagnosed in children or young adults, and because the pancreas makes little or no insulin, requires daily injections; **Type 2** is when the insulin produced by the pancreas is not able to be used effectively and is usually diagnosed after age 30 or 40, but is being diagnosed more frequently in younger people. Risk factors for Type 2 diabetes include family history, lack of physical activity, overweight, unhealthy diet and being an Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, Hispanic, Latino, African American or American Indian.

The good news is that diabetes can be controlled through diet, physical activity and medication. If you are pre-diabetic, you can delay the onset of diabetes by adopting sound eating and fitness habits as well as reducing and managing stress.

Balance is the key word for living with diabetes:

- 1) Adopt and maintain **healthy eating habits**, be sure to eat 5-6 smaller meals throughout the day to keep blood sugar at healthy levels. Choose foods from three or more food groups for each meal. Eat foods with low fat, high fiber and limit sweets and alcohol.
- 2) Control your blood sugar and weight through **physical activity** which strengthens heart, lungs and bones, increases muscle tone, lowers blood pressure, increases energy, improves sleep, relieves stress and makes you feel good.
- 3) If you take pills or insulin injections, be sure your health care provider has explained how these work and that you are clear on how to keep track of your blood sugar level by **daily testing** and getting a hemoglobin A1c test every three months if you take insulin, and at least every six months if you take oral medication.

Additional information can be obtained by calling the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the National Diabetes Education Program at 1-877-232-3422 or e-mail: diabetes@cdc.com