NOTES

Your doctor or therapist has given you this patient education handout to further explain or remind you about an issue related to your health. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, discuss them with your doctor or therapist.

How to Manage Type 2 Diabetes

IF YOU'VE JUST BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH TYPE 2 diabetes, you join the nearly 15.3 million Americans who have this disease. Being diagnosed with diabetes is scary, but don't panic. You can manage the disease in various ways, but first it's important to understand how it works.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes, affecting nearly 95 percent of patients. If you have it, the word insulin is a big part of your vocabulary. Our bodies need insulin because it transfers sugar from our blood into our cells. People with diabetes, however, don't produce enough insulin, or their cells ignore it. Glucose then builds up in the blood, causing blood sugar levels to rise.

When this happens, the cells become energy-starved, which causes damage to the eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart. All of this can be controlled, however, by concentrating on two areas of treatment:

• *Nutrition*. People with diabetes have the same nutritional needs as anyone else. It's important to eat regular, well-balanced meals to improve overall health. These meals should include foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals and breads, dairy products, meats, fishes, poultry, eggs, dried beans and nuts.

But don't consume too much fat or cholesterol because it may increase your chances of heart disease, especially since people with diabetes have a greater risk of developing it. To avoid consuming too much fat in your diet, choose lean cuts of meat, and remove extra fat; eat more fish and poultry (without the skin); use diet margarine or olive oil instead of butter; drink low-fat or skim milk; and limit the number of eggs you eat to three or four a week.

Too much salt may raise your blood pressure as well. So be wary of foods that contain salt, especially products where the taste is hidden, such as cheeses, salad dressings and canned soups.

In addition, avoid excess sugar, which will spike your blood sugar. Desserts, such as frosted cakes and pies, sugary breakfast foods, soda, table sugar, honey and syrup contain lots of it.

• *Exercise*. If you're overweight, like many people with type 2 diabetes, exercise is an important way to take off extra pounds and control the disease. It also can lower your blood sugar levels and improve your body's use of insulin. Your health care provider can help you decide what kind of exercise and how much bests suits your needs.

Whatever activity you choose, however, you must schedule it with your meal plan to keep your blood sugar levels normal. If you're exercising more than one hour after eating, it's a good idea to eat before you start.

As a rule, a high-carbohydrate snack is good before mild to moderate exercise (walking, biking or golf). Such a snack could include 6 ounces of fruit juice or half of a plain bagel.

If you plan on doing heavier exercise (aerobics, running, squash or handball) you may need to eat a little more, such as half a meat sandwich and a cup of low-fat milk.

Blood Sugar

Before exercising, check your blood sugar level with a glucose meter. Write down each result, along with the time and date, and you will soon learn how well your treatment plan is working and how exercise and food affects you.

If your blood sugar is low (under 70mg/dl) you'll need a snack to avoid having an insulin reaction. This episode can happen during exercise or up 12 hours after, making you feel faint, sweaty, dizzy or confused. If you feel one coming on, stop the activity. Immediately ingest half a cup of orange juice, a nondiet soda or three glucose tablets.

If you follow all these rules and problems still surface, don't worry. Sometimes eating well, losing weight and being active aren't enough.

In addition to these lifestyle changes, your doctor may need to prescribe diabetes pills, insulin shots or both.

Type 2 diabetes is serious. But with proper monitoring, diet and exercise, people can live long, healthy lives.

Information adapted from The National Diabetes Association. Accessed via http://www.diabtes.org/main/application

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