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Diabetes – Taking Charge of Your Blood Sugars

by Dr. Sara Rodgers, ND

We all know that exercise and watching what you eat are good for you, but what if you knew that regular exercise and making good diet choices is the difference between chronic degenerative disease and being healthy? Would you take it more seriously?

Many of our patients say “I know I eat too much sugar” and “I know I should eat more vegetables”. What they may not know is how these sugars may slowly lead to diabetes (and other chronic diseases) and that fruits and vegetables actually help prevent disease. In our hectic culture, choosing health gets pushed to the back burner while we work long hours, raise our kids, and make sure our bills are paid. The following information is to energize you to stay on track and make sure your health makes the priority list.

Consider the following information on diabetes:

- 20.8 million Americans have diabetes and of these 6.2 million cases are undiagnosed. 90 to 95 percent of all cases are type 2 diabetes.
- Every 24 hours the following diabetes related events occur: 4,100 new cases of type 2 diabetes are diagnosed, 810 deaths, 230 amputations, 120 cases of kidney failure, and 55 cases of blindness.
- In 2005, 1.5 million new cases of diabetes were diagnosed in people *ages 20 and older*.
- The incidence of obesity and type 2 diabetes is growing in children. This is an alarming trend and may contribute to the prediction that children of today may have shorter life spans than their parents.
- Overall, the risk for death among people with diabetes is about twice that of people without diabetes of similar age.
- Uncontrolled diabetes leads to serious health concerns:
 - Heart disease and stroke account for about 65 percent of deaths in people with diabetes.
 - Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults aged 20 to 74 years.
 - Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure.
 - About 60 to 70 percent of people with diabetes have mild to severe forms of nervous system damage.
 - More than 60 percent of non-traumatic, lower-limb amputations occur among people with diabetes.

While many of us do not have outright diabetes, we may have elevated blood sugars, a pre-diabetic condition predisposing us to diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. It was estimated that 54 million American adults had higher than normal fasting blood glucose. Pre-diabetes is diagnosed when fasting blood sugars are 100-125 mg/dl. (Diabetes is diagnosed when fasting blood sugars are greater than 126 mg/dl, measured on two separate days.)

Luckily, type 2 diabetes is preventable. Furthermore, there is very good information available on creating effective treatment plans for those already diagnosed. To help reduce your risk of elevated blood sugar or diabetes, reduce sugar and simple carbohydrate consumption. Read all food labels. Look at the amount of carbohydrates, fiber and protein. Choose foods that are high in fiber and protein and low in sugars and carbohydrates. Choose unprocessed food and include 5-9 servings (2½ to 4½ cups) of fruits and vegetables daily. Whole grains are a better choice than refined white flour or pasta; whole fruits are better than fruit drinks. Good oils such as olive oil and fish oils help reduce inflammation associated with high blood sugars. Avoid trans fats, commonly labeled as “partially hydrogenated” oils.

A wonderful guide to the treatment of diabetes is found in Dr. Bernstein’s Diabetes Solution, a book written by diabetes expert and type 1 diabetic, Dr. Richard Bernstein, MD. Practicing what he preaches, Dr. Bernstein does not have any complications usually associated with diabetes! Furthermore, genetic research is now revealing how nutrients (*i.e.*, from fruits/vegetables, and if needed, supplements) can have profound impact on genetics and may help reduce manifestations of diabetes within the cell.

In addition to your yearly physical, make sure your fasting blood sugars are between 70-100 mg/dl. It would also be wise to get a complete blood count, a complete metabolic panel, and cholesterol levels checked. If your blood sugars come back between 100 and 125 mg/dl, take this seriously and learn what it takes to reduce your risk of getting diabetes. If you have already been diagnosed with pre-diabetes or have diabetes, read Dr. Bernstein’s book and discuss it with your primary care provider.

Dr. Rodgers and Dr. Haynes can help you create diet and supplement plans designed to normalize blood sugars, lose weight and get fit. Boise Natural Health has a complete line of diabetic support nutrients.

References

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