November Health News

November is Diabetes Awareness Month

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Just Diagnosed With Diabetes? 4 Steps to Take Control

Learn what you can do to manage diabetes

You just found out you have type 2 diabetes. You feel a slew of emotions—shock, disbelief, anger, sadness. The thoughts that race through your mind are scary: shots, blood sugar checks, medications. Do not panic. People with diabetes can live long, healthy lives. Here are four steps to help you get control of your condition.
1 Gather your team!

One of the first things you should do is set up a diabetes care team. This is a group of people who specialize in diabetes care. Your primary care doctor will help you put together a team. Each of these specialists will help you with different diabetes-related issues:

- **Primary care doctor** is in charge of your care. He or she will see you when you are sick and will refer you to other diabetes specialists as needed.
- **Diabetes or nurse educator** helps you manage daily aspects of diabetes. This includes how to take insulin shots and how to identify low blood sugar reactions.
- **Registered dietician** helps you plan a healthy diet.
- **Optometrist or ophthalmologist** (eye doctors) watches for diabetic eye disease.
- **Social worker or psychologist** helps you cope with the emotional side of diabetes.
- **Podiatrist** (foot doctor) helps prevent, diagnose and treat foot complications from diabetes.
- **Dentist** takes care of your teeth and gums.
- **Exercise physiologist** helps develop a fitness program for you.
- **Pharmacist** answers questions related to medication.

The goal of managing diabetes is to keep blood sugar levels under control to prevent complications. Your team will tell you where your blood sugar level should be. You may need to check your blood sugar several times a day to make sure your levels are where they should be. This is especially important right after you are diagnosed, start a new medication or change doses. Your doctor can tell you how many times a day you should check your blood sugar.

2 Learn about type 2 diabetes

After your diagnosis, you will have many questions. Your diabetes team will be able to answer them—from what foods to eat to how to check your feet. It can be overwhelming, so take it slow. Master one concept at a time to best manage your diabetes. Here are the first things you need to know:

1. Your body does not make enough insulin or it can’t use the insulin it makes. This leads to high blood sugar.
2. If you do not manage your diabetes well, high blood sugar levels may lead to:
   -- Heart disease and stroke
   -- Eye problems that can lead to blindness
   -- Damage to nerves and blood vessels that can cause numbness and circulation problems, especially in your feet
   -- Kidney problems that can lead to kidney failure
   -- Gum disease and tooth loss
3. Treatment for diabetes involves helping your body use insulin better. This is done by making lifestyle changes and taking medication. Some people will need to take insulin shots.

3 Know your ABCs

Your risk for complications from diabetes will be lower if you manage your diabetes **ABCs**. Work with your diabetes team to manage them. Recommended ABC levels are:

- **A** is for A1c: below 7 percent.  
  A hemoglobin A1c test shows what your average blood sugar level has been over the past 2 to 3 months.
- **B** is for blood pressure: less than 130/80 mm Hg.
- **C** is for cholesterol: LDL below 100 mg/dL.
Your doctor will let you know if your target ABC's are different from the recommendations.

4 Follow your treatment plan

To help control blood sugar levels, your diabetes team will help you develop treatment plans. The four main components of your treatment plan are:

- **Nutrition.** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and nonfat dairy and low in fat, sodium and cholesterol will help you manage your diabetes.
- **Exercise.** Check with your doctor before you start an exercise program. Exercise is great for people with diabetes because it can lead to better blood sugar control and increased energy.
- **Insulin injections.** Insulin injections lower blood sugar levels by making up for the body's inability to make enough insulin.
- **Oral diabetes medication.** These medicines lower blood sugar levels by improving the release of insulin, reducing blood sugar or lowering insulin resistance.

Controlling diabetes is not easy. It takes time and commitment. With some lifestyle changes and a positive attitude, managing diabetes is very doable.

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A Mediterranean-Style Diet May Help Curb Diabetes

A healthy diet can help ward off type 2 diabetes. But following a Mediterranean diet may lower your risk for the disease even more.

Eating habits can have a major effect on your risk for type 2 diabetes. Studies have shown that a Mediterranean diet may be especially good at reducing your chances of developing the disease.

**Go Mediterranean**

People at a high risk for diabetes can delay or even prevent the disease by losing 5 to 7 percent of their total body weight. Eating Mediterranean-style can contribute to weight loss—and may even help reduce diabetes risk in people who don’t lose weight.

**A Mediterranean diet features:**

- Lots of plant-based foods, such as vegetables, fruits, nuts and whole grains.
- Monounsaturated fats, especially olive or canola oil.
- Low or moderate amounts of fish, poultry and dairy products.
- Very little red meat.
- Low amounts of saturated fats and trans fat, which are often present in processed foods.
- Low or moderate amounts of red wine.

**How does it work?**

People with diabetes don’t make enough of the hormone insulin in their bodies or are not able to effectively use the insulin, or both. Obesity makes the body more resistant to insulin. So losing weight through a Mediterranean diet may help you guard against the disease.
In addition, the monounsaturated fats common in the Mediterranean diet don’t raise blood cholesterol levels the way saturated fats do. High cholesterol is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

Other ways of preventing or staving off diabetes include generally eating well, watching your weight and getting plenty of exercise.

Cut down on the extra sugars, fat and sodium in your diet. Limit fatty cuts of meat, fried foods and full-fat dairy products. For grains, eat only the whole-grain varieties, such as oatmeal, brown rice and whole-wheat breads. Choose colorful vegetables like carrots, sweet potatoes, broccoli and spinach.

Experts recommend getting at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity each week, spread over at least three days. Brisk walking is an example. And if you have type 2 diabetes and don’t have contraindications, try to strength train at least twice a week.

Check with your doctor before beginning or changing an exercise program. He or she will be able to tell you the types and amounts of activities that are suitable for you.

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**Manage Diabetes with Small Changes**

One man learns simple ways to keep diabetes under control by substituting water for soda and hitting the gym more often.

“If you’re not living on the edge, you’re taking up too much space,” was the motto Jeff Peterson liked to live by. “I always ate what I wanted, drank what I wanted and never went to the doctor,” says the 53-year-old energy consultant and father of four. “I guess you could say I was a typical man.”

But he found himself suffering from fatigue, constant thirst and a sense that “something wasn’t working at 100 percent.” So, six years ago, Peterson made an appointment for his first physical in decades. “When my doctor came back with the blood work and told me I had type 2 diabetes, you could have heard a pin drop in that room,” he says. “It was a shock.”

Last year, almost 2 million Americans learned they had diabetes. Diabetes is a set of distinct diseases, with the most common forms being type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes. Each type takes its own path, but they all share a root problem: a breakdown of the body’s ability to convert the glucose that we get from food into the energy that we need to thrive.

“I think it’s normal to try to deny it at first, like I did,” Peterson says of his diagnosis. “But at some point, you’re going to have a wake-up call.” His came last year, when he happened to see an American Diabetes Association (ADA) display showing the staggering 40 teaspoons of sugar found in some super-sized soft drinks. “That was when I realized that if I didn’t start making some changes, my diabetes was only going to get worse,” which could leave him at increased risk of heart disease, blindness and other complications.

Now, Peterson joins his wife at the gym a few times a week, swaps a few of the sodas he used to drink every day for water and takes his blood sugar readings regularly.

“They’re just small changes, but they do make a big difference,” he says. “The numbers are coming down the way they should.” He also joined his local ADA chapter and serves on its board, was captain of “Team Red” for the Walk to Stop Diabetes and now gives support to other people newly diagnosed with the disease.

Looking back on his six-year diabetes journey, Peterson says he wishes he’d known two things sooner: “I wish I would have known how serious diabetes can be, but also how simple it can be to keep it under control.”
UHC Online Seminar:
Preventing, Living and Coping with Diabetes
Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RD
November 8, 2016
12:30 p.m. ET, 11:30 a.m. CT, 10:30 a.m. MT, 9:30 a.m. PT

The good news is that type 2 diabetes, the most common type, is largely preventable. Whether you are newly diagnosed with diabetes, have had it for years or are trying to prevent it, this seminar is for you. Learn about the disease that affects 29 million Americans and an estimated 86 million (roughly 1/3rd of American adults) who are pre-diabetic and may not even know it. According to the American Diabetes Association, preventing and/or managing the disease is so important because diabetes is the leading cause of blindness and kidney failure in adults, it increases risk for heart disease, can lead to circulation problems and is the 7th leading cause of death in the U.S. This seminar will focus on the diet and lifestyle changes and tips that may help you prevent the onset of diabetes or manage the condition with greater success.

To register for an upcoming seminar, visit www.uhc.com/seminars. All seminars are recorded and archived for viewing after the live seminar date.

Test Your Health Care Knowledge!

Test your health care knowledge with two November activities:

- **Are you a health plan pro?** Take a quiz. See if the stars say you’re ready to choose a health plan.
- **What’s the Word?** Complete a crossword puzzle and learn common health care terms for open enrollment.

Participate in one or more of the activities for a chance to win a $500 Visa gift card! Click here to get started!

Health Tip

Could you have pre-diabetes? Take the first step and find out if you’re at risk. Click here to take the CDC Pre-Diabetes Screening Quiz. Answer seven simple questions to get your score and find out how to get tested.
November Healthy Recipe:
Asparagus Prosciutto Sicilian Flatbread

Ingredients

- Cooking spray
- 1/2 pound fresh asparagus spears, trimmed and sliced into 1 inch pieces
- 1 ounce paper thin slices prosciutto, finely chopped
- 1-2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large tomato, thinly sliced
- 2 (6 inch) or 1 (12 inch) whole wheat flatbread, pita or pizza crust
- 1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup Arugula
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup sun dried tomatoes, sliced thin (not oil packed)
- Fresh ground pepper

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400.
2. Heat a large nonstick skillet coated with cooking spray over medium-high heat. Add garlic and prosciutto, sauté 2-3 minutes; add asparagus and cook 3-5 minutes until asparagus are crisp.
3. Place flatbreads on a rimless baking sheet. Evenly distribute sliced tomatoes, asparagus mixture, and mozzarella cheese over flatbreads. Bake at 400 for 10 minutes until golden brown. Remove from oven, distribute Arugula, fresh ground pepper, sundried tomatoes and a drizzle of olive oil over each flatbread. Slice and serve.

Yield

6 servings

Nutritional Information per Serving

Calories: 212  
Calories from fat: 80 (38%)  
Fat: 8g  
Saturated fat: 4g  
Cholesterol: 26mg  
Sodium: 492mg (note: to lower the sodium, skip the prosciutto)  
Carbohydrate: 18g  
Fiber: 3g  
Sugars: 4g  
Protein: 14g

Source: www.uhc.com

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