

## Managing Diabetes Through Health Checkups”

Managing diabetes is a team effort. People with diabetes need to work carefully with their health care providers to insure their treatment plans are the best for them.

For many reasons, people with diabetes need to take an active role in their own health care. They must actively interact with their doctors and other health care providers, know what lab work needs to be done and when, and familiarize themselves with appropriate medical terms and definitions.

Becoming an active partner in your treatment is vital for your health.

Diabetes can't be cured, but it can be controlled. With medical care and proper treatment, complications of diabetes can be prevented or slowed. Working closely with your health care providers is the best way to accomplish this.

But remember: Diabetes is a self-managed disease. You are the only person who is in control of your treatment, 24 hours a day. To provide you with the best medical care, your doctor needs information only you can provide. Much of your diagnosis is based on information from you.

In order to provide accurate information about your condition, you need to:

- Keep written notes of each symptom, including how long it lasted, how painful it was, what you did to help it, etc.
- Keep written notes of anything unusual that might be related to the problem. Because medical visits tend to be short, be organized and prepared for each visit so that you can have your concern or problem addressed. Before you arrive at the doctor's office, write down any questions you want to ask. Take a list of medications you are taking, including herbs and vitamins. Each time you visit the doctor, bring a record of your blood glucose levels, blood pressure, exercise routines and reactions to medication.
- While you are with the doctor, ask questions — ask at the beginning of the visit, not the end. Be honest and straightforward; don't hold anything back. Take notes to help you remember.

Because people with diabetes sometimes have complications, their primary care physicians may refer them to specialists, such as:

- Endocrinologist: a doctor who specializes in hormone problems, including thyroid disease and diabetes;
- Ophthalmologist: a doctor who specialized in care of the eyes;
- Optometrist: a health care professional who provides primary care for eyes;
- Podiatrist: a doctor who specialized in care of the feet;

- Neurologist: a doctor who specializes in the nervous system.

Other possible complications people with diabetes should be aware of include:

- ✓ Dental problems, such as gum disease. Increased blood glucose levels can increase the risk of dental problems. Watch for these symptoms: red, sore or swollen gums; gums that bleed; gums receding from teeth; loose or sensitive teeth; bad breath; a bite that feels different; dentures (false teeth) that no longer fit well.
- ✓ Kidney problems, including diabetic nephropathy, which can cause kidney failure. Because kidney damage happens slowly, you might not notice it. The best way to tell if your kidneys are working properly is to have your urine tested each year to check for albumin. Remind your doctor if you need this test, if necessary.

People with diabetes are more likely to have complications if they also have high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels. These conditions can't be "felt" — they can only be diagnosed through medical testing. Make sure tests for these conditions are part of your continuing medical care.

In addition to eating healthfully — the right foods at the right times in the right amounts — exercising and keeping blood glucose at recommended levels, people with diabetes need to have a good working partnership with all their health care providers.

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