



Making *Life Easier*™

Understanding Diabetes & Reducing Your Risk

Remember the children's song about "the leg bone connected to the knee bone, and the knee bone connected to the thigh bone, and the thigh bone connected to the hip bone?" Recognizing the connectedness of the body's blood, heart and circulatory system is important to understanding diabetes and its affect on one's overall health and quality of life. Diabetes is a chronic medical condition, meaning there is no known cure, but it can be treated. With proper care, most people with diabetes can live normal and independent lives.

More than 25 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with diabetes. In its most basic terms, diabetes has to do with the body's ability to convert and use blood sugar to produce energy. With Type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce sufficient insulin. With Type 2, the insulin the body produces tends to be ineffective. According to the *2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet – 1-26-11*, an estimated 79 million people (approximately 25% of the population) has what is considered prediabetes, which refers to higher than normal blood sugar levels. It is during the prediabetes stage that damage to the heart and circulatory system begins to occur.

Did You Know?

Diabetes is a leading cause of blindness and kidney disease. Problems with the blood can damage the heart and lead to circulatory challenges as blood flows through the heart to the veins and arteries. As a result, people with diabetes have a significantly increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Furthermore, because circulation is compromised, complications may arise, including numbness and difficulty healing wounds, primarily in the feet, which can lead to the loss of a limb in extreme cases. In order to identify and treat issues before they become significant problems, regular check-ups and health screenings are critical for people with diabetes.

"With diabetes, and other chronic medical conditions, prevention and healthy lifestyle choices are key to managing the disease," said Mary Doepke, RN, Owner of Home Helpers of Hinsdale. "As complications arise, caregiving services, such as those we offer at Home Helpers, can help people maximize their independence and maintain their quality of life. Many of our clients with diabetes require assistance

with daily living activities and personal care due to complications that affect their mobility and vision,” Doepke added.

Prevention is Key

The saying “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is certainly true for people to minimize their risk of getting diabetes. The following are a few tips and recommendations that can benefit everyone:

1. **Manage your intake.** The sugar or glucose in the blood comes from food and beverage people consume. Make sure you understand nutrition labels and carefully monitor your intake. Phrases like “non-fat” and “sugar-free” can be quite misleading. “Non-fat” typically means high in sugar, and “sugar-free” typically means high in fat. Also, don’t assume certain foods are better than others. For example, the dressing you put on a salad may contain more fat and calories than a cheeseburger. To learn more about Nutritional Facts Labels, visit www.fda.gov/food/labelingnutrition/consumerinformation/ucm078889.htm.
2. **Manage your weight.** Maintaining a healthy weight is one of the best defenses against diabetes because your body functions at its best at its optimal weight. To determine your ideal weight, talk with your primary health care provider. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/adult_bmi/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.html.
3. **Manage your wellness.** Participating in a regular exercise regimen and practicing healthy living habits, such as not smoking, leads to wellness. One’s risk for complications with diabetes increases dramatically for people who smoke. For recommended activity levels, visit www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html.
4. **Manage your life.** Know the symptoms of diabetes, which include increased thirst and urination, blurred vision and fatigue. Also, take time to learn more about diabetes. The following websites offer a diabetes risk test, tips on healthy eating and lifestyles and lots of other helpful information:
 - American Diabetes Association – www.diabetes.org.
 - MedLinePlus – www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/diabetes.html.
 - National Diabetes Education Program – www.ndep.nih.gov.

HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier* Home Helpers offers quality non-medical and personal care* and companionship services similar to the care and support often provided by family members. Our flexible care plans are tailored to fit our clients’ specific needs and budgets. Compassionate Care is a bi-monthly newsletter produced by Home Helpers. We hope you found this edition to be informative and helpful.

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