Managing Diabetes

Ingrid Adams, Nutrition and Food Science

Diabetes is a disease in which there is too much glucose in the blood. The main goal for a person with diabetes is to keep his or her blood glucose under control. Diabetes management means learning all you can about the disease, maintaining a healthy weight, checking blood glucose three or more times a day, exercising, and/or taking medication as prescribed.

Problems Associated with Not Managing Your Diabetes
Diabetes increases your risk for many serious complications. Complications include:

• Heart disease
• Blindness
• Nerve damage
• Kidney damage
• Gum disease

Learn more about these complications and how to cope with them at the American Diabetes Association website (http://www.diabetes.org/).

Benefits of Managing Your Diabetes
When your blood glucose is close to normal you are likely to:

• Have higher energy levels
• Feel less tired
• Feel less thirsty
• Urinate less often
• Heal better
• Have fewer infections
• Have fewer problems with eyesight, feet, and gums

Practices That Help You Manage Your Diabetes
Physical activity, nutrition, and the correct medication—if necessary—are three ways to manage diabetes. Set daily goals to help you begin a healthful lifestyle. Consult your physician before making changes.

Three key components for managing diabetes successfully.

Daily Steps to manage diabetes:
• Be physically active.
• Develop a healthful individual eating plan and follow it.
• Check blood glucose the recommended number of times.
• Take your medication as prescribed.

Goals for diabetes management:
• Blood glucose measures within target range.
• Total cholesterol, HDL, LDL and triglycerides within target range.
• Blood pressure within target range.
• Calorie intake at recommended level for weight loss or maintenance.
• Intake of nutrients balanced—carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>When to check</th>
<th>Usual Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1C</td>
<td>At least twice a year</td>
<td>Below 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Pressure</td>
<td>Each visit to your doctor</td>
<td>130/80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cholesterol</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>Below 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (LDL) (bad)</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>Below 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol (HDL) (good)</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>Above 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides (TG)</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>Below 150</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Diabetes Education Program. 4 Steps to Control Your Diabetes. For Life.

Exercise

When you exercise You use energy, which lowers your blood glucose level. Physical activity can be a powerful tool for managing diabetics. At first, just focus on getting more exercise. Even 10-minute exercise periods improve your health. Increase the level of activity until you are exercising at least 30 minutes five or more times per week.

Nutrition

A big part of controlling diabetes is managing your diet. Being diagnosed with diabetes often means that you need to change your eating habits. Nutrition management requires that you know how many calories and how much protein, carbohydrates, and fats you should eat, as well as when to eat your meals and snacks. A diabetes educator or registered dietitian can assist you in making a personal plan.

Nutrition Plan

• Have meals and snacks at the same time each day.
• Set consistent carbohydrate intake at meals and snacks.

Nutrition Guidelines

• Balance carbohydrate with insulin and exercise.
• Follow a meal plan that is low in saturated fats, cholesterol and moderate in total fats.
• Make healthy fat choices such as mono- and polyunsaturated fats. For example, olive, canola, peanut oils, avocados, nuts, and seeds
• Reduce protein to reasonable amounts as determined by a registered dietitian.

References


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