

The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS"

Diabetes – Avoiding Complications

Sweet Success

More than 1/4 of Americans 65 and older have type 2 diabetes and roughly another 50% have a condition known as "prediabetes." The odds of developing diabetes increase with age, and so do its sometimes life-threatening complications: dental disease, sexual dysfunction, nerve damage to feet, amputation, heart attack, stroke, visual impairment and kidney disease. Older adults seek *emergency* care for blood-sugar crises twice as often as the general diabetes population.

Obesity is a well-known cause of type 2 diabetes, but a poor diet, lack of exercise, and genetics also contribute.

Most people still don't understand how serious this disease is, and many go undiagnosed until their blood sugar levels are out of control—one reason why diabetes is known as the "silent killer." Even when they know the risks, many people with diabetes still have trouble controlling their blood sugar levels.

Live and Thrive Despite Diabetes

In people with type 2 diabetes, either the *body doesn't produce enough* of the hormone insulin or cells *can't use it properly*. Insulin allows the body to use glucose—blood sugar—for energy. The complications of diabetes occur when glucose builds up in the blood and clogs small arteries instead of going into cells.

Help the person in your care commit to a 24/7 diabetes treatment plan.

☑ **Know the ABCs—**

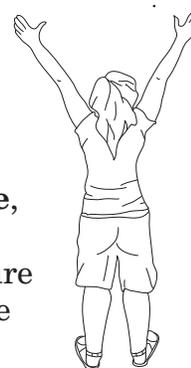
A1C levels, (test that gives you a picture of your average blood glucose control for the past 2 to 3 months) **Blood pressure**, and **Cholesterol**. Like diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol can damage blood vessels, leading to heart attack or stroke.

Encourage the person to work with the doctor to set goals for blood sugar numbers at different times of the day.

☑ **Smoking** increases the risk of diabetes complications; smokers with diabetes are three times more likely to die of heart disease than nonsmokers with diabetes.

☑ **Yearly physicals and regular eye exams** to look for signs of kidney problems, nerve damage and heart disease—as well as other medical problems. An eye care specialist will check for signs of retinal damage, cataracts and glaucoma.

☑ **Keep vaccines** up to date. High blood sugar can weaken the immune system, which makes routine vaccines important. Ask about getting vaccines against flu, pneumonia and hepatitis B.



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on page 2

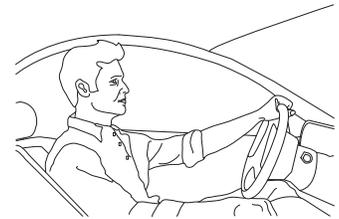
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- ☑ Diabetes increases the chance of gum infections. **Brush, floss, and schedule dental exams** at least twice a year. Consult a dentist if gums bleed or look red or swollen.
- ☑ **Aspirin** reduces the blood's ability to clot, so taking one every day can reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. The doctor will say whether daily aspirin therapy is appropriate for the person in your care.
- ☑ **Alcohol** can cause low blood sugar, so it should be used only in moderation and always with a meal.
- ☑ Work with a dietician to create an **eating plan** that includes lots of low-glycemic foods, which are less likely to raise blood sugar. A Mediterranean diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean meats, whole grains, and healthy fats can help.
- ☑ Join a **diabetes support group** to meet other people who are facing the same challenges and discover new ways to stay healthy.

Source: NCOA, Mayo Clinic

Driving and Diabetes

Drivers with diabetes are 12–19% more likely to have a car accident. Sudden bouts of low blood sugar—hypoglycemia—can cause confusion, delayed reaction, visual disturbances, or loss of consciousness. Diabetic drivers have a responsibility to make sure that their blood glucose level is not too low to drive safely. Always check sugar levels before driving and, if low, eat a snack, wait 15 minutes and check again. This simple precaution can save avoid accidents and save lives.



Resource for You Living with Type 2 Diabetes Program

Enroll in this free program and receive valuable information on how to manage diabetes over the following over 12 months.

The program is available in both English and Spanish.

Visit www.diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

Simplifying Diabetes Care

Older diabetics often have a hard time remembering to check blood sugar level, take pills or administer insulin shots, especially when they also have to manage other health problems. If the person in your care is struggling with complex medication schedules, talk to a doctor about simplifying the routine. In many cases, it may be possible to combine medications or make instructions easier to follow.

Taking Care of Yourself—Depression and Diabetes

People with diabetes are at greater risk of depression because hormones produced in response to stress may prevent insulin from working properly. Depression makes it harder to concentrate, keep active, and follow a diabetes management plan. This can make diabetes worse, which then makes depression worse. So make sure you and the person in your care stay positive, take time to laugh and relax, and get plenty of sleep. If you see more than 3 of the symptoms below or if “the blues” stick around for 2 weeks or longer, speak to a health care professional.



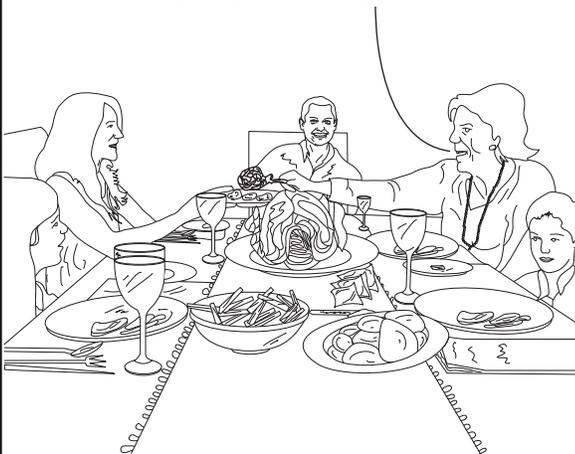
- Change in appetite
- Reduced energy/feeling tired
- Trouble concentrating
- Change in sleep patterns
- Nervous or guilty feelings

Note Exercise – Thirty Minutes Every Day

Exercise can help control diabetes. If the person in your care has diabetes, her doctor may recommend a complete physical exam and possibly an exercise stress test to determine the *safest* way to increase physical activity. Whether it's walking, dancing, swimming or strolling, remember—Thirty Minutes Every Day is essential for good health.

Live Life Laughing!

I love Thanksgiving. It is the only day that big thighs are a good thing.



Inspiration

It is better to ask some of the questions than to know all the answers.

~James Thurber

Don't Fall—Be Safe

Install easy-access light switches at room entrances so you will not have to walk into a dark room to turn on the light. Glow-in-the-dark switches also may be helpful.

The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS Diabetes and Eye Health

Diabetes raises the risk for eye disease and vision loss. A condition known as *diabetic retinopathy* occurs when excess blood sugar clogs up the tiny blood vessels in the eye. This can eventually starve the eye of blood and cause vision loss. Have eyes checked yearly, especially because diabetes-related eye problems often have no symptoms in the early stages.

If the person in your care has diabetes, urge them to begin insulin therapy as soon as his doctor suggests it. Many people believe that it's better to wait as long as possible before beginning insulin. This can be very dangerous because waiting too long can allow diabetes to cause a lot of damage. Often, insulin injections are the most effective way of preventing diabetes complications such as retinopathy.

If retinal disease does occur, it is often treatable if it's caught in the early stages.

Source: *Realage.com*; CDC