

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Diabetes Care and Precautions

Diabetes can affect many parts of the body, and can lead to serious problems such as heart disease, blindness, kidney damage, and lower-limb amputations. People with diabetes can reduce these risks with the help of their doctors, families, and caregivers. This means controlling the levels of blood glucose (blood sugar), blood pressure, and blood lipids (cholesterol), and receiving regular preventive care.

Older people with poor control of blood sugar levels often have problems with thinking, depression, and other disabilities. If you are caring for an older person who has diabetes, be sure they see the doctor on a regular basis to be evaluated. Good diabetes care can help reduce the risk of complications.

**Blood Sugar**—Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy. In order to keep the amount of blood sugar in the blood from becoming too high, people with diabetes take supplemental insulin in pill form, by pump, inhaled or by injection. Caregivers are often responsible for blood sugar testing.

**Insulin Shock**—Blood sugar levels can also become too low from giving too much insulin or from poor diet, resulting in a serious condition called insulin shock or hypoglycemia. Signs include: shaking, nervousness, feeling

faint, or even passing out. Call 911 immediately if the person faints and is unresponsive.

**Blood Pressure and Cholesterol**—People with diabetes are more likely to have a heart attack or stroke. Lowering blood pressure and cholesterol through better diet and medication can help limit this risk. Lowering blood pressure also reduces stress on the kidneys.

**Weight Control and Exercise**—Eating regular, balanced meals that include carefully measured portions can help keep diabetes under control. Caregivers should limit the amount of candy, cookies, and other desserts given to someone with diabetes. Always read food labels for hidden sugars in unexpected places such as crackers, bread crumbs, and ketchup. Sometimes, simple measures such as watching the diet, losing weight, and increasing exercise can bring diabetes under control.

**Eye Care**—People with diabetes should see the eye doctor regularly. Laser therapy can reduce the possibility of severe vision loss caused by diabetes.



## SAFETY TIPS—Taking Care of Feet

People with diabetes may lose the feeling in their feet because the nerves are damaged. This is why the feet need to be checked *every day*. Without nerves to warn the brain of injury, the tissue can break down, leading to possibly severe infections and the need for amputation. Taking good care of the feet can reduce amputation rates by 45 to 85 percent. Things to look for cuts, swelling, changes in color or shape, difference in feeling—less sensitive or hurt more.

To protect feet, keep blood sugar at healthy levels. Exercise helps keep the blood flowing to the feet—person with diabetes should put up their feet when sitting, wiggle their toes and move their ankles for five minutes, two or three times a day, and keep their legs uncrossed. Don't put feet into water without first checking the temperature with your hand.

For more information, visit the **American Diabetes Association** [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

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

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### Signs of Diabetes

Some people with diabetes have *no* symptoms until they find out from a routine blood test. Some symptoms—

- feeling very thirsty
- urinating often
- feeling very hungry or tired
- losing weight without dieting
- sores that heal slowly
- dry, itchy skin
- pain, tingling or loss of feeling in the feet
- blurry vision

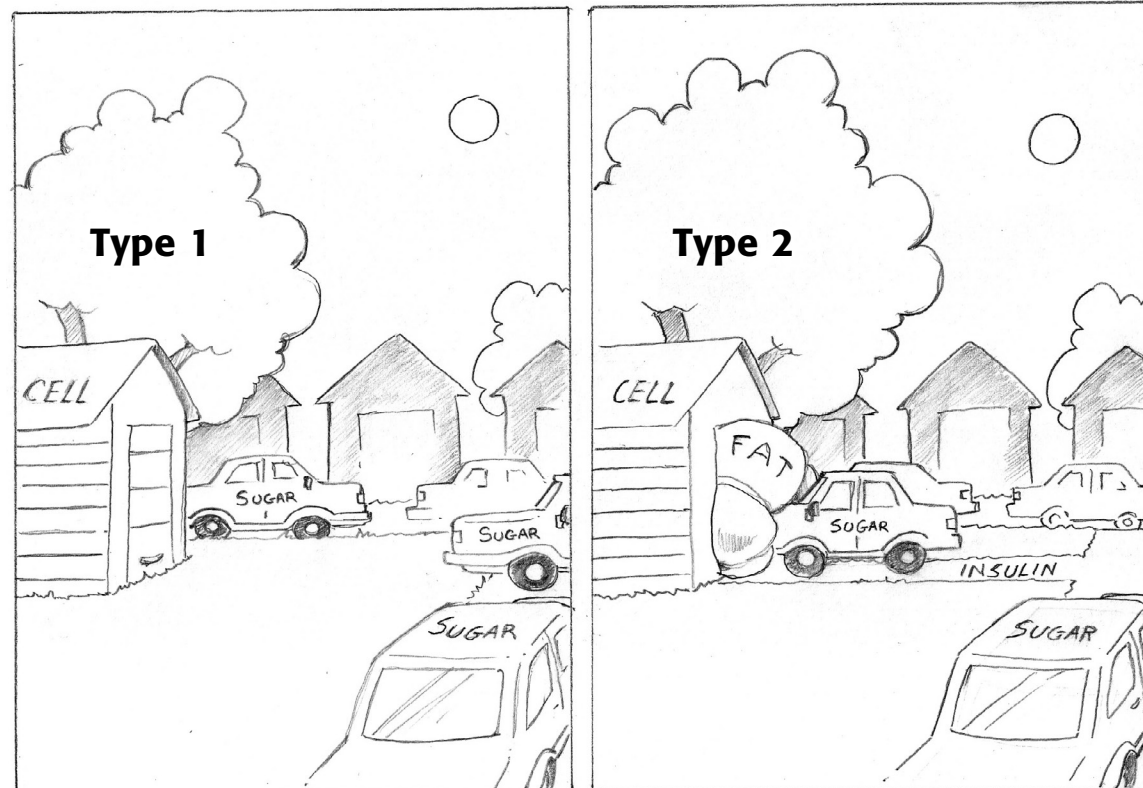
### Healthy Eating

Eating the *right amount* of food will also help manage blood glucose level and weight. Portion size examples:

- ☞ 1 serving of meat or poultry is a deck of cards
- ☞ 1 3-ounce serving of fish is a checkbook
- ☞ 1 serving of cheese is six dice
- ☞ 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta is a rounded handful or a tennis ball
- ☞ 1 serving of a pancake or waffle is a DVD
- ☞ 2 tablespoons of peanut butter is a ping-pong ball
- ☞ Drink water instead of sweetened beverages. If you drink alcohol, drink moderately—no more than one drink a day if you're a woman or two drinks a day if you're a man.

Source: The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases Health Information Center

## Understanding Diabetes



The pancreas doesn't produce insulin so there is no way for the sugar to get into the cells.

Insulin is produced but can't get into the cells.

### Taking Care of Yourself—Manage Stress & Quit Smoking

When we are stressed, blood sugar levels go up. And when we're anxious, we may not manage diabetes well—forgetting to exercise, eat right, or take medicines. **Manage stress** through deep breathing, yoga, tai chi, or hobbies that you enjoy and relax you. **Smokers** are 30–40% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than nonsmokers. And people with diabetes who smoke are more likely than nonsmokers to have trouble with insulin dosing and with controlling their disease. If you have diabetes and you smoke, you are more likely to have serious health problems from diabetes, including:

- Heart and kidney disease
- Poor blood flow in the legs and feet that can lead to infections, ulcers, and possible amputation (removal of a body part by surgery, such as toes or feet)
- Retinopathy (an eye disease that can cause blindness) Peripheral neuropathy (damaged nerves to the arms and legs that causes numbness, pain, weakness, and poor coordination)

If you are a smoker with diabetes, quitting smoking will benefit your health right away.

Source: CDC.gov

### Inspiration

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

### Live Life Laughing!

My doctor said to never leave home without them.



### Memory Care

A person with dementia should have yearly eye examinations. Poor vision can contribute to confusion. These exams can also spot or detect other serious diseases such as diabetes. Finding and treating eye disease early can prevent serious diseases from getting worse and leading to blindness.