



Senior Series

A partnership between Ohio State University Extension
and Ohio Aging Network professionals



For more information, visit the Ohio Department of Aging web site at: <http://www.goldenbuckeye.com>
and Ohio State University Extension's "Aging in Ohio" web site at: <http://www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife/aging>

Diabetes and the Older Adult

Approximately 18 million people (over 6% of the population) in the United States have diabetes. Another 16 million people have pre-diabetes, meaning that their blood glucose levels are higher than normal. It is estimated that 1 in 10 people will develop diabetes in their lifetime.

Of all the states, Ohio ranks eighth in the number of people diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death in Ohio and the sixth leading cause of death listed on death certificates in the United States. It is also very costly. In 2002, it cost the United States \$132 billion: \$92 billion in direct medical costs and \$40 billion in indirect costs including loss of work, disability, and premature mortality.

Almost everyone knows someone whose life is affected by diabetes.

When it's not controlled, diabetes may lead to serious complications including heart disease, stroke, eye dis-

ease, or kidney damage. Over half of the people in the United States on dialysis have diabetes. Other complications are nerve damage and circulation problems most common in the feet and hands. These complications may lead to lower-limb amputations.

Diabetes Definitions

To understand diabetes, it's important to know some basic definitions. Diabetes is a chronic disease that has no cure; however, there are ways to manage it.

- **Diabetes:** A disease where your body doesn't produce enough insulin or can't use its insulin. Insulin is produced in the pancreas and helps glucose (a sugar) get from the bloodstream into cells.
- **Type I Diabetes:** The body makes little or no insulin. People with Type I Diabetes take insulin regularly. One out of ten people with diabetes has

Type I, and it is usually diagnosed as a child or young adult.

- **Type II Diabetes:** The body doesn't make enough insulin or the cells ignore it. Nine of ten people with diabetes have Type II Diabetes, and learn that they have the disease as an adult.

Risk Factors for Diabetes

- People over the age of 40
- People who are overweight
- People who are sedentary
- People who have a family history of diabetes

If you have an increased risk for diabetes, you should see a doctor and be tested for diabetes.

Warning Signs of Type II Diabetes

- Excessive thirst
- Frequent urination
- Extreme hunger
- Weight loss
- Irritability
- Weakness, fatigue, sleepiness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Recurring wounds that do not heal
- Blurred vision

- Tingling in hands or feet
- Itching

It is important to know that some people with Type II Diabetes don't have any symptoms.

Controlling Diabetes

If your doctor tells you that you have diabetes, there are several things you can do to help keep it under control. They include medications, blood testing, healthy nutrition, and exercise.

- **Medication:** Your doctor may recommend a medication to help control your diabetes.
- **Blood Testing:** Frequent blood sugar testing will help check your glucose level. Some people test their glucose several times a day.
- **Healthy Eating:** Talk with a Registered Dietician or Certified Diabetes Educator to determine a healthy diet. Use the Food Guide Pyramid, Dietary Guidelines, Plate Method, Food Exchange Lists, or Carbohydrate Counting to help you. Dining with Diabetes is a series of classes offered by many Extension Offices and community health partners. These classes include information on healthy eating, meal planning and preparation, and health information.
- **Exercise:** If you are overweight, losing weight may help you to control your diabetes. Talk with your health

care provider and choose an activity that you enjoy and that will help you to manage your weight. Thirty minutes of exercise, five or more times a week, is recommended.

For additional information about diabetes contact:

- Your local health care provider
- American Diabetes Association
Attn: National Call Center
1701 North Beauregard Street
Alexandria, VA 22311
1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
www.diabetes.org
- National Diabetes Education Program
One Diabetes Way
Bethesda, MD 20814-9692
301-496-3583
www.ndep.nih.gov

- National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse
1 Information Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3560
1-800-860-8747
<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/>

References

- Diabetes Overview: National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC), <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/overview/index.htm>
- Take Charge of Your Diabetes, Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003.
- The Burden of Diabetes in Ohio, Ohio Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, April 2004.

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