

Get Up, Get Moving, and Get screened for Diabetes *By Grace Yu, MD*

Diabetes mellitus is a disorder which the body is not able to make enough insulin to keep the blood sugar under control. About 90 percent of diabetics have type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes affects approximately 8 percent of the US population, with as many as 25 to 40 percent of those remaining undiagnosed. Diabetes is a chronic progressive illness and can lead to serious and debilitating complications when left undertreated. It is the leading cause of blindness, kidney failure, non-traumatic limb amputation, heart attack and stroke.

Common signs and symptoms of diabetes include excessive thirst, urination, blurred vision and unexplained weight loss. However, most people do not experience any symptoms during the early stage of the disease when intervention is most helpful to reduce or prevent complications.

There are 3 common ways to screen for

diabetes: check fasting plasma glucose, perform a 2 hour glucose tolerance test (check blood sugar level two hours after having sugary drink), or measure hemoglobin A1C. The normal value is less than 100 mg/dL for fasting glucose, less than 140 for 2 hours tolerance test, and less than 5.6 for hemoglobin A1C. Fasting glucose greater than 126, two hour checks greater than 200 for the glucose tolerance test, and hemoglobin A1C greater than 6.5 are considered positive screenings for diabetes.

If a person has a blood sugar number higher than normal but lower than the diabetic range, the person is considered to have glucose intolerance, fasting glucose impairment, or pre-diabetes, all of which increase the risk of developing diabetes in the future. The good news is that diabetes is PREVENTABLE at this stage. Weight loss, staying active, eating right, and medication (such as metformin) can help to decrease risk.

If a person is overweight, a 5-10% weight loss can reduce the risk of diabetes by up to 50%. Eating a well balanced meal that is rich in vegetables, fruits, fiber and is low fat with lean protein can help to keep blood sugar under control. Exercise helps, too. Aim for 30 minutes a day, 4-5 times a week. It is always beneficial to do activities you find enjoyable (walking, hiking, dancing, gardening) and to set aside times in your schedule to perform these types of activities.

Type 2 diabetes is a serious but preventable condition. Early screening and intervention are the keys to avoid diabetes and all the complications associated with it. If you have signs and symptoms of diabetes or if you are at risk of getting diabetes (family history of diabetes, history of gestational diabetes, overweight), please talk with your provider about being screened for diabetes.

System Update

Thunderbird Internal Medicine will begin implementing our new electronic medical record system on May 1st. Called eClinicalWorks, this new product was selected to help enhance efficiencies and care by linking patient demographics and medical records to insurance, billing, and claims data. As we go through our learning curve, we apologize in advance for any unforeseen delays!



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