

Managing Diabetes and Preventing Complications

Tips from Margaret Pochay, RD, CDE, Diabetes Educator, and Lynn Bosse, RN, WCC, Wound Center Program Director

November is American Diabetes Month, and according to the American Diabetes Association, nearly 26 million children and adults in the U.S. have diabetes. Another 79 million have prediabetes and are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

According to Margaret Pochay, RD, CDE, registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator at SMG Specialty Care in Taunton, diabetes is a chronic disease. One of the unique aspects of living with the illness is that patients themselves play a key role in managing the disease through maintaining a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

Managing diabetes through healthy eating

“Eating healthy with diabetes is the same as healthy eating for everyone,” says Pochay. “There are not going to be any foods that need to be completely given up. Balancing meals and snacks over the day can help to control blood glucose. Portion control is a key part of balancing meals.”

To balance a hot meal and control portions, divide your 9-inch plate into quarters. One quarter of the plate should contain lean protein like chicken, fish, lean beef or meat substitute that has been baked, broiled or grilled. Another quarter of the plate should contain a side dish like rice, pasta, potato, bread or a starchy vegetable like corn or peas. The rest of the plate should contain non-starchy vegetables like salad, green beans, broccoli or carrots. When the plate is filled with vegetables, it helps to fill us up, give us important nutrients and avoid a dramatic rise in blood glucose.

Eating healthy does not guarantee that the blood glucose stays controlled. Other things like medications, stress and inactivity also affect blood glucose. Eating healthy can help us to stay healthy, control weight, feel better and have more energy. With some planning and creativity, healthy eating can taste good too!

Preventing complications: diabetic foot wounds

According to Lynn Bosse, RN, WCC, program director for Morton Hospital’s Center for Wound Healing, diabetic foot wounds are one of the most common conditions that the center treats. The center specializes in treating non-healing wounds with many advanced methods including hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Bosse and the wound center team offer these tips for avoiding foot wounds for patients with diabetes:

- Keep your blood sugar in control; Poorly controlled blood sugars damage nerves in your feet. This results in loss of feeling in the feet, including feeling pain if the feet become injured or develop an open wound.
- Inspect your feet daily with a long-handled mirror. Look for any of the following:
 - o Pain, swelling or redness
 - o Areas hot to touch
 - o Blisters, calluses, corns or warts
 - o Ingrown nails
 - o Rashes
 - o Dry cracking skin, especially between toes
 - o Change in color (from pale to deep purple or red) or areas of shiny skin
 - o Bad smell
- Wash your feet every day with warm water and soap, and dry well, especially between toes. Avoid soaking your feet and lotion between the toes.
- Wear shoes that fit well, and avoid going barefoot inside and outside your home.
- Prior to putting on your shoes be sure to check for foreign objects by placing your hand inside the shoe or slipper.
- If you do have a loss of feeling in your feet, check with your doctor to see if it is safe to trim your own nails.
- Avoid smoking as it causes a decrease in blood flow to your legs and feet.

For more information about diabetes services provided by SMG Specialty Care, please call 508-822-2266. For information about The Center for Wound Healing, call 508-828-7780 or visit www.steward.org/Morton.

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