



Diabetes Outlook

STAYING HEALTHY ■ LIVING WELL

SUMMER 2010

Can You Hear Me Now?

Adults with diabetes are about twice as likely as those without diabetes to have hearing problems, according to a large study in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Researchers think diabetes may damage nerves and blood vessels of the inner ear. This damage, in turn, may lead to hearing loss.

Hearing tends to decline with age. But when you have diabetes, this decline may start

earlier than usual. Here's an earful about how to protect your precious hearing, now and for the future.

- **Say no to noise.** Over time, loud sounds can damage sensitive structures of the inner ear. Wear protective earplugs or earmuffs when doing something noisy, such as mowing the lawn or operating power tools.
- **Turn that down!** If you're

listening to music through earbuds and someone next to you can hear the lyrics, it's loud enough to cause damage.

- **Get help if you need it.** Talk with your doctor if you suspect that you might have a hearing problem. Watch for warning signs, such as turning the TV louder than before and often asking people to repeat what they say.



Is Exercise Safe for Women with Diabetes?

Yes! Exercise can help women with diabetes improve blood glucose levels. But you need to keep these safety strategies in mind:

- Follow your doctor's advice for monitoring blood glucose levels. Exercise can sometimes cause blood glucose to rise or decline.
- If your eyes are affected by diabetic retinopathy, talk with your doctor about exercises to avoid. Straining or shaking may cause heavy bleeding or other serious problems.
- Wear shoes with silica gel or air midsoles to protect your feet.
- Check your feet closely before and after exercise. Look for blisters, sores, or swelling. Call your doctor if any bruise does not begin to heal after one day.
- If diabetes has caused a loss of feeling in your feet, substitute swimming or biking for weight-bearing exercises like walking.

Remember to talk with your doctor before you begin any exercise program.

Good Health Guidelines

For people with diabetes, it's important to have the following tests and checkups:

- Hemoglobin A1c test two to four times a year
- Blood pressure checked at every office visit
- Foot inspection at every office visit and complete sensory foot exam once a year
- Dilated retinal (eye) examination once a year
- Fasting lipid profile test at least once a year
- Urinary protein/microalbumin test once a year
- Cholesterol levels, including low-density lipoprotein and high-density lipoprotein, checked at least once a year
- Serum creatinine measured once a year
- Regular dental checkup at least twice a year

A CLOSER LOOK

Urinary Protein/Microalbumin Test

Some people with diabetes develop kidney disease over the course of several years. If left untreated, it may gradually worsen until the kidneys finally fail. But if the problem is caught early, treatment may keep it from getting worse. Because early kidney disease usually doesn't cause symptoms, it's important to have a urinary protein/microalbumin test every year. This urine test shows how well your kidneys are working. When kidney damage first starts, small amounts of albumin, a blood protein, can leak into the urine. This condition is called microalbuminuria. As the damage progresses, the amount of albumin and other proteins in the urine increases. This condition is called proteinuria. The test checks your urine for telltale protein or albumin.

Although these are suggested guidelines for care, please check with your benefits plan for coverage. Guidelines for children may be different. Check with your health care provider to learn which tests children need and how frequently they need them.

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4 Simple Tricks to Help You Lose Weight

When you need to lose weight, little things really do mean a lot. Small lifestyle changes—such as starting a meal with broth-based soup or a green salad—can help you control your appetite and shed pounds. And because even a modest weight loss can improve your blood glucose levels, that's big news if you have diabetes.

Losing weight doesn't require radical changes. The simple, painless strategies below can help you lose weight and keep it off.

- 1. Add soup to the menu.** A study in the journal *Appetite* found that people who had soup for a first course ate 20 percent fewer calories at lunch than those who skipped the soup. Yet the soup eaters felt just as satisfied at the end of the meal. Part of the reason may be that soup has low energy density—a low number of calories per unit of weight. This means filling up on soup before eating foods with higher energy density can help you eat fewer calories overall.
- 2. Dish up sensible portions.** To reduce the temptation to reach for a second—or third—helping, serve food on individual plates. Leave serving bowls off the table. Also, when grabbing a healthy snack, put a single serving in a small bowl first. Don't eat straight from a large package, which makes it far too easy to keep eating and eating.
- 3. Sip a cup of green tea.** What you eat isn't the only thing that counts. What you drink can also make or break your weight-loss efforts. Research suggests that drinking green tea may help with both managing weight and controlling blood glucose. In contrast, drinking



sugar-sweetened soft drinks has been linked to both having more body fat and being at increased risk for type 2 diabetes.

- 4. Go to bed an hour earlier.** Lack of sleep is another thing that may increase the risk for both type 2 diabetes and obesity. Scientists are still sorting out all the reasons. However, it's known that sleep affects hormones that help regulate appetite. Sleep also influences the body's use of blood glucose.

Such simple changes may seem like baby steps. But over time, they add up to a giant step toward a healthier weight.

Say Bye-Bye to Bladder Blues

Not so long ago, bladder problems were talked about in hushed tones—or not at all. But today, people are discussing such things more openly. And that's good news, because diabetes can damage the nerves of the bladder, leading to bladder problems.

A study in *Neurourology and Urodynamics* found how distressing the symptoms of bladder damage can be. The study included women with type 2 diabetes. For these women, the most troublesome bladder symptoms were loss of control over urination and the need to get up frequently to urinate at night.

Other common symptoms include not urinating often enough and having repeated bladder infections. Fortunately, there are things you can do to manage all these forms of bladder blues.

What Can Go Wrong

Symptoms of bladder damage can all be caused by underlying problems related to diabetes.

Here's a quick rundown of four common problems:

- **Loss of muscle control.** The urethra—the tube that carries urine from the bladder out of the body—is surrounded by muscles called sphincters. Normally, these muscles squeeze tight when you're not urinating. This closes the urethra and holds urine in the bladder. But if nerves to the muscles are damaged, the sphincters may become loose and let urine escape. Or they may stay tight all the time, making it hard to let go of urine when you try.
- **Overactive bladder.** Damaged nerves may also send faulty signals to the bladder. As a result, some

people may feel as if they have to urinate too frequently—eight or more times a day, or two or more times a night. Others feel a sudden, urgent need to urinate immediately.

- **Urine retention.** Some people can have a completely different problem: They don't feel the urge to urinate, even when they should. Damaged nerves might not signal the bladder when it's time to urinate. Or nerve damage might make the bladder muscles too weak to empty the bladder completely. If urine stays in the bladder too long, an infection can develop. Also, if the bladder gets too full, urine may back up and put harmful pressure

on the kidneys. In other cases, the bladder may overflow, causing little urine leaks.

- **Urinary tract infections.** When bacteria get into the urinary tract, an infection may occur. Some people with diabetes have repeated or long-lasting urinary tract infections (UTIs). Symptoms include:

- Needing to urinate more often than usual
- Pain or burning during urination
- Reddish, cloudy, or smelly urine
- Pressure in the lower abdomen

What You Can Do

For all these problems, there are solutions. The first step is to let your doctor know about any bladder symptoms you're having. Antibiotics are needed to treat UTIs. Other medications and treatments are sometimes prescribed for problems with urination. In addition, your doctor might recommend self-care strategies:

- **Timed voiding**—Going to the bathroom on a set schedule may help if you feel the urge to urinate too often or not often enough.
- **Kegel exercises**—Strengthening muscles that control the bladder may reduce urine leaks.
- **UTI prevention**—Drinking plenty of fluids can help ward off future UTIs. So does urinating before and after sex and wiping front to back.

Last but certainly not least, controlling your diabetes is crucial. This helps prevent or delay further nerve damage. And stopping bladder problems before they start is always your best option.

Can an Aspirin a Day Keep Heart Attacks Away?

An aspirin a day might help keep your heart healthy. That's important if you have type 2 diabetes, which increases your chance of having a heart attack or stroke. In fact, your risk is as high as that of someone who already has heart disease.

The Diabetes Connection

One way aspirin might do your heart good is by helping keep red blood cells from clumping together, which can lead to a blood clot. If the clot blocks a blood vessel to the heart or brain, it can cause a heart attack or stroke. In people with diabetes, red blood cells seem to clump together more easily.

A study published in *Diabetes Care* found that daily aspirin reduced the risk for death from heart disease in people with type 2 diabetes, but scientists still need to research this further. There's still more to be learned about how aspirin affects the heart when diabetes is present.

Words to the Heart-Wise

Daily aspirin isn't for everyone. In some people, it can irritate the stomach lining, causing nausea, vomiting, pain, and bleeding. To decrease the chance of side effects, doctors prescribe the lowest possible dose. Typically, that's the amount in one baby aspirin or half of an adult aspirin.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force issued guidelines for using aspirin to help prevent heart disease. They recommended daily aspirin for men ages 45 to 79 and women ages 55 to 79, but only when the potential benefits of protection against heart attack for men and stroke for women outweigh the risk for stomach problems. That's a call that needs to be made with your doctor. So, be sure to talk with your doctor to determine if taking an aspirin daily is right for you.





Blood clot. A clump that forms if your blood coagulates, or hardens into a solid. Blood clots can block blood flow within a blood vessel. This can prevent oxygen from reaching certain parts of your body, like your heart or brain, causing serious problems.

Energy density. The amount of energy in food per unit of weight. Energy density is typically measured in calories per gram. High-fat foods, for example, tend to have higher energy density than leaner foods. Foods that have higher water content, such as fruits, vegetables, or soups, have lower energy density or fewer calories per unit of weight.

Inner ear. The innermost part of the ear, which houses the organs that help you balance and hear.

Urinary tract. The system of organs involved in urine production and release. It includes the kidneys, the tubes that connect the kidneys to the bladder, the bladder, and the urethra. The urethra is the tube that takes urine from the bladder outside the body.

What Is Ketoacidosis?

Ketoacidosis may not be a household name. But if you have diabetes, it's a word you should get to know. This complication usually occurs in people with type 1 diabetes, although it also occasionally happens to those with type 2.

Ketoacidosis can be serious. But to stay in control, it's important to understand and recognize the warning signs.

Ketoacidosis 101

The body requires insulin to use glucose in the blood for energy. When there isn't enough insulin, the body starts to burn fat for energy instead. Fat burning creates waste products called ketones, which can build up in blood and show up in urine.

Having high levels of ketones in the body creates a condition called ketoacidosis. It affects people of all ages. In fact, a study in *Pediatrics* found that it's the first thing leading up to a diagnosis of type 1 diabetes in about 30 percent of children with the disease.

Spot the Warning Signs

You can check your ketone level at home with a simple urine test. Ask your doctor about it. You might be instructed to test for ketones if your blood glucose level rises above 300 mg/dl, or if you develop symptoms of ketoacidosis. Early symptoms include:

- Excessive thirst
 - Dry mouth
 - Frequent urination
- As ketoacidosis gets worse, other symptoms may include:
- Constant fatigue
 - Flushed or dry skin
 - Fruity-smelling breath
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Nausea or stomach pain
 - Confusion or foggy thinking

Act Without Delay

If you develop these symptoms, call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room. Left untreated, ketoacidosis could lead to coma or even death. Prompt action is very important to avoid serious problems and get diabetes back under control.

To avoid ketoacidosis in the first place or to have an action plan ready when it occurs, talk with your doctor.



How to Portion Your Plate



You eat at least three times per day. That's three opportunities every day to choose foods that will provide the energy you need. Plus eating right will help control your diabetes.

Knowing what to eat can seem complicated. But it's simple. Properly portioning your plate ensures that you eat more foods that are good for you. It can also help you manage your weight. Fruits and vegetables fill your belly, leaving less room for unhealthy, high-calorie foods. For people with diabetes, portioning your plate can help control blood glucose levels. Here's how it works:

- Take a dinner plate and draw an imaginary line down the middle.
- Split one side in half again so you have three sections. Fill each section with these foods:

Fruits and Veggies

Fill half of your plate with fruits and veggies. Make this section as colorful as you can. Different-colored fruits and vegetables contain different vitamins and minerals that provide various health benefits. However, with diabetes, have a piece of fruit on the side of your meal and fill this section with nonstarchy vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, green beans, lettuce, peppers, and tomatoes.

Meats

Choose leaner cuts of meat since they contain less saturated fat and calories. Try fish such as salmon or tuna. Also try skinless poultry such as chicken or turkey and lean cuts of beef or pork. For an alternative to meat, try eggs, tofu, and low-fat cheese.

Carbs

This section contains starchy foods that only come as high as a deck of cards. Choose whole-grain foods, such as brown rice, whole wheat bread, or pasta. Or you can try starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, acorn or butternut squash, peas, or corn.

Grilled Vegetables

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 sweet potatoes, cut into 1-inch slices
- 3 cobs of corn, cut into 2-inch sections
- 1 eggplant, cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 12 green onions, trimmed

Directions

Mix oil and garlic in a large bowl. Add vegetables and toss. Place vegetables on broiler pan or grill. Cook 10 minutes, turning twice, until vegetables are tender. Place vegetables on a platter. Serve.

Nutrition Facts

Serving size is 1/6 of recipe. Each serving contains 190 calories, 6 g total fat, 1 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 55 mg sodium, 34 g total carbohydrate, 8 g fiber, 8 g sugars, 5 g protein

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Fruits and Veggies: More Matters"



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