

Healthy Choices for a Healthy Lifestyle

Effects of Smoking

Most people know about the risks for cancer and damage to the lungs caused by smoking. Smoking also causes changes in the body and blood vessels that can increase your risk for heart attack, stroke and vascular disease (disease of the blood vessels). Diabetes and smoking is a dangerous mix. Many of the health problems that go along with diabetes can be made worse when you smoke. It has been proven that smoking:

- Increases blood glucose (sugar)
- Increases blood pressure
- Increases heart rate
- Reduces the amount of oxygen supplied to the body
- Makes the blood thicker
- Causes narrowing of blood vessels
- Increases cholesterol levels
- Increases LDL (bad cholesterol)
- Decreases HDL (good cholesterol)
- Increases triglycerides (another type of fat in the blood)
- Increases the loss of calcium in the urine

If you smoke, quit! Quitting can be hard work. The drug in tobacco is nicotine. Nicotine is very addictive, and it may not be easy to quit smoking.

You must first decide that you want to quit smoking. Some people can quit all at once, while others need to gradually cut back on smoking. There are programs available to help you quit. Talk with your health care team about programs that are available to help you.

The first few months will be the hardest time. Have a plan to replace your desire for a cigarette.

When you give up cigarettes, the bad effects that smoking has had on your body are decreased. Quitting can save your life!

Alcohol

Alcohol can affect your diabetes control. Alcohol has to be broken down in the liver. It takes the liver about two hours to break down one drink. While the liver is breaking down alcohol, it cannot release glucose back into the bloodstream. If you drink alcohol without eating, your blood glucose can drop too low. Drinking alcohol that contains sugar could cause a rise in blood glucose.

Alcohol does not turn into glucose. It turns into fat. This can cause weight gain. Alcohol can also cause triglyceride levels to go high. Drinking more than two alcoholic drinks each day may cause liver damage and other health problems. Alcohol can cause your judgement to be altered.

Guidelines for alcohol use

- If you choose to drink alcohol, limit to one to two drinks per day and only when your diabetes is under good control.
- Do not drink alcohol on an empty stomach. Drink alcohol with a meal or snack.
- Do not omit food if using insulin; non-insulin users may need to substitute alcohol for fat exchanges.
- Avoid sweet wines, liqueurs and sweetened mixed drinks.
- Wear medical identification.
- Do not drive if you have been drinking.
- Check your blood glucose to know how alcohol affects you.

If alcohol is a problem, you may want to contact the local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous by calling 1-800-ALCOHOL (1-800-252-6465), Alanon at 1-800-344-2666, or a local alcohol treatment program.

Street Drugs

Unfortunately, some people rely on illegal drugs as a way to cope with problems or for fun. These drugs can affect blood glucose directly and indirectly.

Illegal drugs may:

- Keep you from taking care of yourself
- Keep you from making good choices
- Raise or lower blood glucose
- Make you hungry

If drug abuse is a problem, contact your local chapter of Narcotics Anonymous at 1-800-COCAINE.