



Diabetes Outlook

STAYING HEALTHY ■ LIVING WELL

FALL 2008

Fend Off Flu and Pneumonia

When you have diabetes, getting the flu or pneumonia can be risky. Fortunately, you can take steps to prevent these illnesses. Here's what you can do.

Don't Wait—Vaccinate

A yearly flu shot is a must for people with diabetes. The shot doesn't guarantee that you'll stay flu-free, but it can improve your chance. It's a good idea for anyone you live with to have

one, too. October or November is the best time to get it.

The pneumonia shot helps prevent pneumococcal disease. It doesn't offer 100 percent protection, but it can help prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death. You can get the shot at any time of the year.

Most people need just one shot for life. People with diabetes may need a second one if they had their first shot before

age 65 and it has been at least five years.

Prevention Pointers

To steer clear of illness this season, you can also:

- Wash your hands often
- Avoid touching your face
- Not have close contact with people who are sick

Your health care provider may have additional suggestions.



How Do I Use a Glucometer?

A glucometer, or blood glucose meter, is an essential tool for managing diabetes. Regular testing and good record-keeping allow you to keep close tabs on day-to-day changes in diabetes control. Follow these basic steps when using your meter:

1. Wash and dry your hands.
2. Prick the side of your fingertip with a lancet.
3. Squeeze out a drop of blood. If it doesn't come out easily, try hanging your hand down and gently shaking or squeezing the finger.
4. Catch the blood on a test strip. For correct results, use only strips that are recommended for your particular brand of meter.
5. Insert the test strip into the meter.
6. Note the results in a log.

Some meters allow you to test in other places on your body, such as on your palms or forearms. Ask your health care provider when it's OK to test in these places.

Each meter is a little different, so read the instructions carefully and don't be afraid to ask your provider for help.

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
- 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

Understand the Serum Creatinine Measurement

Diabetes can damage the kidneys, reducing their ability to filter waste products out of the blood. A serum creatinine test measures how well your kidneys are working. Creatinine is a waste product that comes from meat protein in your diet as well as from normal wear and tear on your muscles. The test measures how much creatinine your blood contains, which shows how much blood your kidneys filter in a minute. As the kidney filtering rate goes down, the creatinine level goes up. A high creatinine level may be a sign of poor kidney function.

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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Don't Let Anger Get the Best of You

Anger is a common reaction to diabetes. Living with the condition can be demanding at times, and anger is one way people defend themselves against feelings of fear and anxiety.

A little anger can give you the extra push you need to manage diabetes. However, too much anger can bring unhappiness and make it hard to focus on your treatment plan. Fortunately, there are ways you can manage anger to keep it from spiraling out of control.

Express It or Suppress It?

One way to deal with anger is to talk about it. If your anger is directed at another person—for example, a spouse or coworker who makes insensitive comments—calm down before you approach him or her. Then tell the person politely but directly what is on your mind. Keep your comments positive and be prepared to listen to the other person's side, too.

A second response to anger is to hold it in. This may work up to a point. The danger is that you could turn the anger inward or take it out on others in less direct ways. You may find yourself constantly feeling annoyed, frustrated, or depressed. Or you may catch yourself frequently making critical or cynical comments. These are signs that your efforts to suppress anger may be backfiring, taking a toll on your health and relationships.

Cool Down a Hot Temper

A third way to handle anger is to change how you feel on the inside. These steps may help:

- Reconsider negative thoughts. Overly negative thoughts fuel anger and resentment. Take the example of someone whose glucose reading is up. Instead of thinking, "This is terrible. I'll never get the hang of managing diabetes. Life



is so unfair!" a more positive approach is to think, "My glucose is high today, but I know what to do." Try to think more realistically when faced with these types of situations.

- Accept what you cannot change. Not all problems can be fixed, and trying to solve them only breeds frustration. At times, your best bet may be to focus on learning to live with a problem rather than trying to solve it.
- Use humor to defuse tension. Humor helps put things in perspective. Plus, it's hard to be mad at the world when you've got a smile on your face.

By taking these steps to control anger, you can make it work for you—not against you.



Understand Your Child's Diabetes Diagnosis

Your child has just been diagnosed with diabetes, and your head is spinning. What does this news mean for you as a parent?

Your first job is to learn all you can about diabetes. Armed with the facts, you can take actions today that can protect your child's health for years to come. Be sure to ask your child's health care provider about anything you don't understand. To start the ball rolling, read on for answers to four questions parents commonly ask.

How Do Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes Differ?

It's a good question to ask because the conditions affect the body differently. Here's how:

- **Type 1 diabetes** is the leading form of diabetes in children. It is an autoimmune disease, meaning the immune system turns against part of the body. In healthy people, certain cells in the pancreas, called beta cells, produce a hormone

called insulin. This hormone is essential for moving glucose from the blood into body cells, where it serves as the body's main energy source. In people with type 1 diabetes, the immune system attacks and destroys the beta cells. As a result, the pancreas makes little or no insulin. Children with type 1 diabetes must take insulin every day.

- **Type 2 diabetes** used to occur mainly in overweight middle-aged and older adults. As more children become overweight, this form of diabetes is growing more common in young people, too. When type 2 diabetes is first diagnosed, the pancreas is usually making enough insulin, but the body is unable to use it effectively. After several years, insulin production drops.

Why Does My Child Have This Disease?

Scientists still aren't sure exactly why one child gets diabetes while another one doesn't. Genes seem to play a role in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, but they aren't the whole story. In type 1 diabetes, environmental factors—possibly viruses or toxins—may also set the disease in motion. In type 2 diabetes, being overweight and physically inactive add to the risk.

What Can Happen if Diabetes Is Not Controlled?

Poor diabetes control leads to a high level of glucose in the blood. Even if your child feels fine, high blood glucose puts a strain on the body. Over time, it can cause serious problems, including damage to the blood vessels, nerves, eyes, and kidneys. If left untreated, such damage can eventually result in:

- Heart attack or stroke
- Loss of toes or feet
- Blindness
- Kidney failure

Fortunately, treatments for such problems are available if needed. Prevention is even better—and good diabetes control now can prevent or delay many problems later.

What Does the Future Hold for My Child?

Children with diabetes can enjoy a full life. The key is taking good care of their health and keeping their blood glucose as close to normal as possible. To do that, they need to:

- Make smart lifestyle choices
- Choose healthy foods and eat the right amounts
- Stay physically active

In addition, children need to follow their treatment plan, take any diabetes pills or insulin as prescribed, and check their blood glucose regularly.

It can be tough for kids to grasp why good diabetes care is so important. Tomorrow can seem far away, and it can be tempting to slack off on self-care today. That's where your perspective can make a critical difference. With your support and encouragement, your child can get started down a path that leads to a long, healthy future.

Making a Change? Don't Delay!



Do you sometimes put off a task that feels daunting? When people procrastinate, the problem often comes as a result of self-blame and fear of failure. People who procrastinate usually know that they would be better off taking action sooner. Even so, just taking that first step is easier said than done.

Overcome Negative Thinking

When making a change, you may feel anxious and worried about what will happen if you can't do things perfectly on the first try. Here are some ways to ease these worries:

- Consider the positive things you can tell yourself every time a negative thought creeps into your mind.
- Enlist the help of family and friends to keep you focused on your goal.
- Use concrete reminders to build confidence, such as sticky notes with positive messages.
- Remain honest with yourself. This means saying no to distractions.
- Don't use excuses that give you permission to put off what is most important to your well-being.

Plan Early and Often

Getting past procrastination means leaving wishful thinking behind. You can do it—and you'll be more likely to try when you have a realistic plan to follow. Start by breaking big goals into smaller, easily attainable goals. The simplest way to overcome procrastination is to take your first step toward your goal today.



Autoimmune disease.

A condition in which the body's system for fighting infection, called the immune system, attacks part of the body itself.

Beta cells. Insulin-producing cells in the pancreas (a large gland located behind the stomach).

Chronic kidney disease. The slow and gradual loss of kidney function over several years. The final stage of the disease process is kidney failure.

Glomeruli. Tiny looping blood vessels in the kidneys where wastes are filtered out of the blood.

Kidney failure. A serious condition in which the kidneys are unable to rid the body of harmful wastes. People with kidney failure must have either regular dialysis (an artificial blood-cleaning process) or a kidney transplant (surgery to receive a healthy kidney from a donor).

Diabetes and Kidney Disease

Diabetes can affect just about every part of your body, and the kidneys are no exception. Over time, diabetes can lead to chronic kidney disease (CKD), the gradual loss of kidney function. The final stage of CKD is kidney failure, a serious condition in which the kidneys fail to rid the body of harmful wastes. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, diabetes accounts for nearly 44 percent of new cases of kidney failure—more than any other single cause.

There's good news, too. There are steps you can take right now to prevent or slow down kidney problems.

Your Kidneys: The Inside Story

The kidneys keep you healthy by filtering waste products out of your blood. Each kidney contains about 1 million glomeruli, tiny filters composed of looping blood vessels. Wastes are filtered out of the blood there and then passed from the body in urine. But useful substances such as protein are too big to get through the filter holes, so they are left behind in the blood.

In people with diabetes, this finely tuned system can break down. A high level of glucose in the blood makes the filters work harder than normal. After several years, overwork can cause the filters to leak, and useful protein is lost in the urine. In time, the filters stop working and waste products build up in the blood.

Two key tests used to check for kidney problems are a urine test for albumin (a protein) and a blood test for creatinine (a waste product). Most people with diabetes need to get both of these tests at least once a year.



Taking Charge of Your Health

Here are two ways you can help protect your kidneys and prevent or delay damage from diabetes:

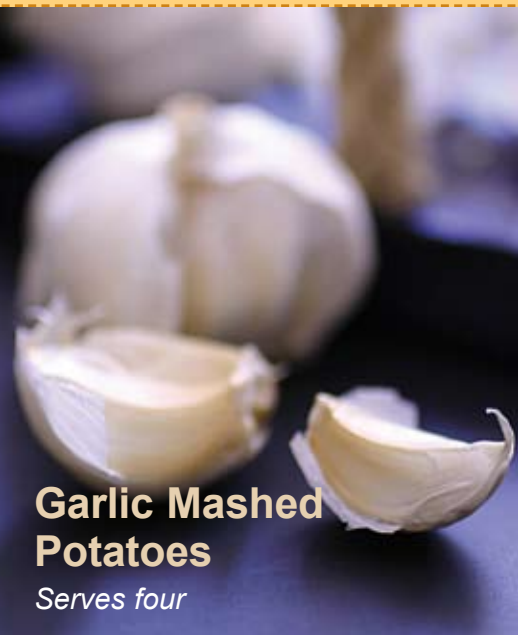
- **Keep blood glucose under control.** Tight control reduces the risk of developing early CKD by a third. In those who already have early disease, it cuts the chance of it getting worse in half.
- **Maintain healthy blood pressure.** High blood pressure dramatically speeds up kidney damage. Have your blood pressure checked regularly and take any prescribed medication. ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors and ARBs (angiotensin receptor blockers) are two blood pressure-lowering medications that can help slow the progression of CKD.

Have a Healthy Holiday

The holidays are fast approaching, and so are festive parties and meals. Whether you're preparing the food or simply taking part in the fun, you can celebrate the season in healthy style. Here's how:

- **Make smart substitutions when cooking.** Look for ways to lower the fat, sugar, and calories in your favorite foods. For example, you may be able to use evaporated skim milk in place of heavy cream. Or you might cut the amount of sugar in half and add sweetness with cinnamon, nutmeg, or vanilla instead. A sugar substitute is another option for lightening up recipes.
- **Volunteer to bring a low-fat snack or low-sugar goodie.** Your host will appreciate the gesture, and you'll be assured of having something healthy to eat.
- **Don't save up your appetite.** You'll be more likely to overeat. Plus, for people taking certain diabetes medicines, it's best to stick to a regular meal schedule.
- **Decide in advance how much to eat.** Then have a response ready for those who urge you to eat more. A friendly but firm "No, thanks—I'm full" is often all it takes.
- **Put your dessert on a diet.** Split dessert with a friend or simply ask for a half-serving. To save even more calories, skip the whipped cream or chocolate sauce.

Finally, enjoy the company. Grab a glass of sparkling water with lemon and start up a conversation. It's the no-fat, sugar-free, zero-calorie way to indulge in holiday cheer.



Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Serves four

Ingredients

2 (1 lb.) large potatoes, peeled, quartered
 2 cups skim milk
 2 large cloves garlic, chopped
 ½ tsp. white pepper

Directions

Cook potatoes, covered, in a small amount of boiling water for 20 to 25 minutes or until tender. Remove from heat. Drain and cover again. Meanwhile, in a small pan over low heat, cook garlic in milk until soft (about 30 minutes). Add milk-garlic mixture and white pepper to potatoes. Beat with an electric mixer on low speed or mash with a potato masher until smooth.

Per Serving

Calories 142, Total fat <1 g (Saturated fat <1 g), Cholesterol 2 mg, Sodium 69 mg, Total fiber 2 g, Protein 6 g, Carbohydrates 29 g, Potassium 577 mg

This recipe is from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

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