



“The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”
(Revelation 22:2)

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The Basics of Diabetes

Why Should We Care about Diabetes



The Facts

Once you know the facts, it is hard not to care. In America alone, 25.8 million people have diabetes. Almost 2 million Americans are newly diagnosed each year, and a third of all the people with diabetes are unaware they have it. In the U.S., diabetes is the seventh leading cause all deaths.

The WHO (World Health Organization) has declared that there is an epidemic of diabetes. Worldwide, there are 347 million diabetes patients, not including those who still do not know that they have it. Only in 2000, there were 171 million diabetes patients. By 2030, the projected number of known diabetics is expected to reach 366 million.

But compared to the alarming nature of these numbers, the amount of attention paid to the disease has been relatively small until recently. This is one reason why the rise in diabetes has often been called the “Silent Epidemic.”

Certain aspects modern lifestyle has been singled out as a possible cause of this epidemic:

- Food that contain higher numbers of calories and purified sugars
- Larger meal sizes
- Inadequate exercise
- Higher stress levels
- An increase in the elderly population.

What Exactly is Diabetes?

There are several definitions of diabetes. The most common definition is that diabetes is a condition where a persons ability to metabolize carbohydrates (sugar) is impaired.

For diabetes patients, blood sugar basically stays in the blood instead of getting burned inside the muscles and tissues, but rather stays in the blood. This results in high blood sugar levels. A person with a sugar level of above 150 ml/dl in the blood in the morning is diagnosed with diabetes.

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Insulin allows the body to convert the sugar in the blood into energy. It is secreted by β (beta) cells in the pancreas. In diabetes patients, either no insulin or inadequate levels of insulin are being produced. Even insulin is produced, it is unlikely that it will be properly utilized.

What Types of Diabetes Are There?

There are commonly two types of diabetes.

- *Type I Diabetes:* This is when the body cannot produce insulin. Type I diabetes patients must have daily insulin shots. A more rigorous definition states that Type I diabetes is the result of an auto-immune process: the body regards the β beta cell as foreign objects and produces an antibody to kill its own β beta cells.
- *Type II Diabetes:* Here, the body fails to produce enough insulin. Or, if it does not produce enough, the body is either unable to respond to the insulin or the insulin is used inefficiently (this is called insulin resistance). Type II diabetes, or Adult Onset Diabetes, is more common than Type I.

The Effects of High Blood Glucose and Diabetes

How Can Having High Blood Glucose Affect Me?

Diabetes is much more than a relative lack of insulin. In one sense, it is a disease that affects the blood vessels and capillaries too. The causes and effects of a high blood sugar is still not completely understand when it is a result of insulin resistance or a lack of insulin.

But the detrimental effects on the blood vessels are clear. Blood vessels gradually stop working probably. Every organ and tissue relies on the blood vessels to transmit oxygen and glucose, and remove waste products. The failure of blood vessels then leads to end-organ damage.

Every cell needs glucose for fuel. Any impairment to metabolizing glucose and thus delivering it to cells leads to the damage of these cells and organs. As a result, tissues and organs like the kidneys retina, those with the highest demand for proper blood flow, are the most vulnerable to destruction by high blood sugar. The lack of blood flow and oxygen to the tissues can also result in many infections so grave that often amputation is the only way to treat them.

High blood sugar also causes increased fatigue and weight gain. These are not instantly lethal, but cause long-term and permanent damage over many years that are then followed by lethal complications. This is why we often take a lax attitude to high blood sugar: the harm is slow and gradual—but certain and fatal.

What Complications Can Diabetes Cause?

It is a mortifying list:

Kidney failure

Diabetes is the leading cause.

Blindness

Diabetes is also the leading cause here, particularly among Americans between the ages of 25 and 70.

Higher chance of dying from cardiovascular disease and stroke.

The probability of dying from stroke and cardiovascular disease is increased by 400% in people with diabetes, and 2 out of 3 people with diabetes die from heart disease and stroke.

Damage to the nervous system.

Approximately 60%-70% of diabetics have some form of nervous system damage.

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Trouble functioning sexually

Erections involve blood flow and nerves. Because diabetes causes nerve damage and affects blood flow, many male diabetes patients struggle with sexual dysfunction. The first question doctors ask when a patient complains of erectile dysfunction is, "Do you have diabetes?" According to statistics, more than half of sexual dysfunctions among males come from diabetes.

Increased risk of heart attacks and amputations

Sixty percent of amputations in the U.S. occur among people with diabetes. This means that each year, 82,000 amputations are performed on people with diabetes.

Why People Without Diabetes Should Care

What is the Relationship between Diabetes and Obesity?

Diabetes basically involves an inherent metabolism problem. The muscles' inability to absorb and process blood sugar means they are always malnourished. The insulin that is produced may not be used efficiently. Coupled with lack of exercise, the excess glucose eventually becomes fat. Abnormal blood sugar metabolism also affects appetite. All this leads to weight problems.

Between 70%-80% of obese people have diabetes. Likewise, 70%-80% of diabetes patients have difficulty controlling their weight.

I Don't Have Diabetes. Why Should I Be Concerned?

Diabetes is the "silent killer." Diabetes patients often do not know they have diabetes because they cannot feel it. A direct blood glucose measurement is necessary to diagnose diabetes. Diabetes will have been developing for average seven years by the time a person actually is diagnosed. Diabetes will have already entered the later stages when the active symptoms and complications are first observed. Early detection is good, but prevention is even better. A yearly blood test is essential, even if you feel healthy.

What is Pre-Diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is when

- A person has a higher than normal blood glucose levels (hyperglycemic) but the level is not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetic, or
- A person is unable to secrete enough extra insulin in response to a glucose challenge.

79 million adults in the U.S have "Pre-diabetes". At this point, long term damage to the body is already occurring and often lead to Type II diabetes. But the development into Type II diabetes can be prevented if blood glucose is controlled at an early stage.

The unobvious symptoms of diabetes often cause the disease to be called the "Silent Killer". People who have diabetes or pre-diabetes initially do not feel any pain or symptoms. It is only when the diabetes has reached a serious stage when all the complications, pain, and symptoms finally surface.

Once a person is diagnosed with diabetes, the odds are that the disease began destroying his body seven years ago. After the diagnoses, blood sugar rises on average 100 milligrams per deciliter every 10 years. Diabetes is a progressive disease.

How Does Diabetes Affect Different Age Groups?

The elderly are at a high risk because the prevalence of diabetes increases with age, especially Type II diabetes. Approximately half of all diabetes cases occur in people older than 55 years of age. Forty percent of people over the age of 60 have impaired glucose tolerance. One in four individuals over the age of 60 has Type II diabetes. A main contributing factor to developing Type II diabetes is declining physical and metabolic activity, which comes with age. Also, reduced mitochondrial activity in muscle cells, which also progresses with age, is a major cause for insulin resistance.

There is also an increasing trend of diabetes in younger age groups. This increasing trend also includes children. Between 2001 and 2009, the prevalence of diabetes of youth ages 10 to 19 years in the US increased by an estimated 30.5 %. Today, 45% of all pediatric patients in the U.S are Type II diabetic. Because diabetes is not regularly screened in children, many children go undiagnosed. This is especially dangerous because diabetes is a progressive disease. Once diagnosed, there is an almost unavoidable potential for it to escalate. Therefore, it is important to control it early on, especially in children.

As mentioned previously, Type II diabetes is also known as Adult Onset Diabetes. However, Adult Onset Diabetes becomes a misnomer with the rise of Type II diabetes in children.

The rise in diabetes amongst children is alarming because diabetes progresses over time. Diabetes worsens with the time. Pharmaceutical drugs just add to the problem. Diabetic pharmaceutical drugs seem to lose their effectiveness over time. This forces the diabetes patient to increase the dosage to achieve the same result as before. We can predict that when a diabetic child becomes 20 or 30 years old, he will face an advanced stage of diabetes where oral drugs no longer work. He will then need insulin shots.

The alarming increase of diabetes in children is parallel to the rise of obesity in children. Sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy eating habits, and various other factors have contributed to the threat of diabetes in children. Over a third of all American children are overweight or obese. Between 1980 and 2012, the percentage of American children aged 6 to 11 years who were obese increased from 7 % to nearly 18%. The percentage of American children aged 12 to 19 years who were obese during this same period increased from 5% to 21%. Obese children and adolescents have a 70% to 80% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults.

People often comment that children can outgrow their diabetes with diet and exercise. They are wrong for the vast majority of cases. Diabetes is a progressive disease and will only worsen with time.

What are the Dangers of Depending on Pharmaceutical Drugs?

What many people do not know, and what many doctors do not emphasize, and what everyone should be aware of:

All pharmaceutical drugs involve major risk.

Of course, these drugs are valuable for their ability to work effectively and efficiently. They are tremendously helpful in controlling blood glucose. However, they only work over a relatively short period of time. So they are effective temporarily, but only temporarily. Over time, they lose their effectiveness. Diabetes patients are forced to increase their dosage within ten years. Within another few years, even the increased dosages will no longer be effective.

The negative side effects are another danger of pharmaceutical drugs. Liver failure, kidney failure, damage to the brain and heart are just some of the related consequences of pharmaceutical drugs. For example, a significant portion of all kidney failures in diabetes are actually due to diabetic drugs – not the disease itself. In the face of such dangers, it is impossible to tell which is worse: the disease or the drugs?

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