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Health Sunday Topic: *Managing Diabetes from Head to Toe*

Diabetes is one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States and it is more prevalent in the African American community. Diabetes can be managed with lifestyle changes such as healthier food choices, increased physical activity, proper medication use and regular visits to the doctors.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes (sometimes called “sugar”) means that your body has problems with a hormone called insulin (your body does not make enough insulin and/or the insulin that your body produces does not work as well as it should. Insulin helps your body use the sugar you eat (also called glucose) for energy.

How can you tell if you have diabetes?

If you check your blood sugar and it is above 126 Mg/dL before meals or is higher than 200 Mg/dL after eating, you should see a healthcare provider! Mg/dL stands for the number of milligrams of glucose (or sugar) for every deciliter of blood; that is the way blood glucose is measured.

- Over 23 million people in the United States have diabetes.
- Diabetes is the leading cause of death in Durham, NC
- 3.7 million, or 14.7% of all African Americans aged 20 or older have diabetes
- Diabetes is the #1 cause of kidney failure.

Sources: 2011
Durham County
Community Health
Assessment;
Carolina Donor
Services.



Bryan Batch, MD

According to the MD & Duke Endocrinologist Bryan Batch – eating a healthy diet, exercising and taking medications can help decrease blood sugar and prevent complications. A healthy diet in limited portions is one that includes;

- fruits and vegetables,
- lean meats,
- fiber,
- decreased sugar,
- decreased fat, and
- decreased carbohydrates.



Who is at risk?

Anyone can develop diabetes, but you are more at risk if you:

- Are over 45 years old
- Are overweight
- Are African American, Hispanic, Native American or Asian
- Have a family member with diabetes
- Have high blood pressure

While you can't change some of these risk factors, you can manage or control your diet and weight. These kinds of healthy changes can help you prevent or control diabetes and help protect your kidneys.

What are some complications when diabetes is not controlled?

Almost half of all kidney failure cases are caused by diabetes. It is important for African Americans to consider becoming organ donors because many who suffer with diabetes, often require a kidney transplant.

When your body doesn't use insulin the way it should, too much sugar stays in your blood. Too much sugar in your blood can harm the tiny filters in your kidneys.

Desiree Palmer, DMD, a Durham dentist in private practice states, "Patients with diabetes must maintain good oral health. Diabetes, like many systemic diseases, show up as oral conditions in the mouth, specifically periodontal (gum) disease. Diabetic patients with periodontal disease and poor oral care have more difficulty maintaining healthy blood sugar levels. Patients with uncontrolled diabetes have an increased risk and severity of gum disease. Regular dental checkups are important."



Desiree Palmer, DMD



Ask your doctor to check the sense of feeling in your feet.

Elaine Hart-Brothers, MD, encourages people with diabetes to check their feet regularly. She states, "High blood glucose may lead to nerve damage. As a result, you may not be able to feel a callus or blister on your foot. Poor blood flow may cause the callus or blister to become infected which may lead to an ulcer or worse."

Some warning signs of foot complications are:

- changes in skin color,
- swelling of the foot or ankle,
- pain or numbness in the lower legs, and
- open sores on the foot that are slow to heal.

Warning Signs or Symptoms of Diabetes:

Frequent urination
Irritability, Slow healing skin infections
Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet

Unusual weight loss, Increased fatigue
Blurred vision
Excessive thirst and hunger

If you don't have diabetes, you can reduce your risk of developing it with regular exercise, keeping your weight under control, controlling stress and anxiety, and eating a balanced diet.

For more information, please refer to the following websites or call:

- www.diabetes.org
- www.eatright.org
- www.niddk.nih.gov
- www.blackhealthcare.com
- 1-800-AHA-USA1
- To register as an organ donor, 919-470-8680

A Message from your Community Health Coalition in partnership with the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity, North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Central Carolina Black Nurses' Council Inc., Durham Academy of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy (DAMDP) and Durham Regional Hospital.

REMEMBER: Healthy People 2020 – A Clear Vision to Healthy Living!