



Spotlight On Disability

Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease that is debilitating and disabling on its own in many cases, but it is especially difficult to control if it is a secondary condition.

According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/faq/basics.htm> diabetes is caused when blood glucose levels are above normal. When we eat, food is turned into sugar, or glucose, which the body processes to use for energy. In a human body, the pancreas is charged with creating a hormone called insulin to help the glucose get into the cells of the rest of the body. A person with diabetes either can't use his or her own insulin as well as he or she should be able to, or his or her body doesn't make enough insulin to deal with the glucose.

You may not realize that diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. It can cause serious health problems, including heart disease, kidney failure, and blindness. It also can cause sores that do not heal, sometimes leading to an amputation of the lower extremities.

Symptoms of diabetes include excessive thirst, unexplained weight loss, extreme hunger, very dry skin, fatigue, and sudden vision changes. A doctor must diagnose diabetes. Sometimes insulin-dependent, or Type 1 diabetes, has an abrupt onset which includes nausea, vomiting, or stomach pains.

Type 1 diabetes accounts for approximately 5 to 10 percent of all diagnosed cases of diabetes. The rest of the cases are adult-onset diabetes, gestational diabetes (which only occurs in pregnant women), and diabetes stemming from specific genetic syndromes, illnesses, or malnutrition.

As you become older, you are more likely to become diabetic. Family history of diabetes is also a risk factor, as is obesity, physical inactivity, and race/ethnicity. Persons who are African-American, Hispanic/Latino American, Native American or American Indian, and some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at high risk for Type 2 diabetes.

A health care provider should monitor your diabetes on a regular basis. For some people with diabetes, all they need to do to control their blood sugar is to eat healthy foods, lose weight, and keep an eye on their blood sugar. Others have to inject insulin or take pills to keep their blood sugar within the normal range.

It is estimated that millions of people have diabetes and do not know they have it. Because diabetes can wreak havoc on a person's organs, it is very important that it is diagnosed and treated as soon as possible. If you have any of the symptoms of diabetes, have your blood sugar tested. You will more than likely have to do a fasting blood sugar test, meaning you won't be able to eat anything that morning and then you will go to your doctor's office and give a blood sample. If your doctor tells you that you might have diabetes, start making lifestyle changes such as exercise and eating more healthily now to avoid more complications later.

If you suspect you have diabetes, see your doctor immediately! Even if you don't know you have it, diabetes can damage your body's organs. As always, if you have questions regarding your disability and you would like your Independent Living Specialist to research these for you, please contact us!