

Living with Diabetes

MILFORD REGIONAL DIABETES EDUCATION PATIENT NEWSLETTER



FALL 2022

What Is Diabetes?

To understand diabetes, it helps to know how your body digests food. When you eat food containing carbohydrates, your stomach breaks it down into sugar and releases it into the bloodstream. Your pancreas (an organ of the digestive tract) releases a hormone called insulin in response to the increased level of sugar in the blood. Insulin allows the sugar to leave the bloodstream and enter the cells of your body, giving you energy. Without insulin, the sugar isn't able to enter your cells, and instead stays in the bloodstream, therefore creating a *high blood sugar*.



There are three main types: of diabetes.

- With Type 2 diabetes, the most common, the body prevents insulin from working right, which is called *insulin resistance*. Your body may also make less insulin than it did before. Type 2 diabetes can develop at any age, though, it is more common in people over 45 years old.

- Type 1 diabetes is an auto-immune disorder where the body attacks the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas by mistake.

The body isn't able to make insulin anymore, so people with Type 1 need to take insulin injections every day. Type 1 diabetes can develop at any age, though it usually develops in children, teens, or young adults.

- Gestational diabetes only happens in pregnancy, when hormones are produced to support the growing baby, but also increase the blood sugar levels. The body makes more insulin to keep the blood sugar down, but some people are not able to make enough insulin and blood sugars remain high. Blood sugars generally return to normal after giving birth, but people who develop gestational diabetes are more likely to develop Type 2 later in life.

Proven lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity, and losing weight, can also improve your blood sugars and lower your risk for long term complications.

Diabetes is a common but serious disease. If you already have diabetes, good habits and lifestyle changes can help you reach your goals and avoid problems down the road.



Wearable Insulin Therapy Helps to Manage Diabetes

Technology to control the complexities of diabetes has come a long way in recent years and is now transforming the way diabetes is managed.

Compared to traditional methods of blood sugar monitoring, today's modern blood glucose monitoring systems transmit blood sugar levels frequently, showing the fluctuation throughout the day. Combine it with the ability to automatically dispense insulin whenever the blood glucose begins to rise – and you can get a clear picture of just how impactful this new technology really is.

MRPG patient Jessica Castillo knows about it all too well. Castillo was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes as a college student at UMass Lowell over 17 years ago. "I started to have symptoms...

Continued on side two...

Short on Time for a Healthy Meal? Not Enough Energy After Work?



If you are trying to manage your diabetes or just eat healthy but can't make a meal from scratch at home, what can you do?

Semi-homemade meals are always an option to help to create a well-balanced meal with minimal effort. Consider a rotisserie chicken with steamed fresh brown rice and a side salad. But how about the times you only have a few minutes to grab a quick lunch or dinner? Can you use a frozen meal? If you choose wisely, sometimes you can.

If you need to use frozen meals at home or work, here are a few tips to help keep you on track with your meal plan.

Be savvy with the nutrition facts labels. Make sure you are having only one serving, some packages have more than one. Most frozen meals do contain additional sodium and be aware that you are trying to stick to 1,500 mg of sodium per day so plan accordingly. Make sure your meal has protein and

the amount of carbs that you are able to fit into your meal. Some lighter meals may not fill you up. If so, feel free to add another serving (or two) of non-starchy vegetables to your meal.

Tips for making better choices:

CALORIES Aim for 300-400 calories

PROTEIN 15 grams or more

SODIUM 500-660 mg or less per serving

FIBER 5 grams or more

Feel free to add the following to your meal to round it out.

- A glass of low sodium V-8
- ½ cup no sugar added fruit cup or small fresh fruit
- Side salad or cup of cooked non starchy vegetables
- 1/3 cup of cooked beans
- Flavoring such as Mrs. Dash or fresh herbs or salsa

Wearable Insulin Therapy / Continued From Side One

urinating frequently, drinking gallons of water and still being thirsty, and I lost 30 pounds in a very short period of time," said Castillo. "They were the tell-tale signs - I just knew it. I went to my doctor and he said 'yup, you have a blood sugar of about 600.'"

Castillo first managed her disease with daily injections and carb counting for about 10 years, eventually transitioning to an automated insulin pump. "It's wireless. I've been on it ever since. It's really awesome and works with a sensor to adjust insulin."

Castillo's new insulin pump is tubeless and waterproof and can be worn almost anywhere insulin is injected. A virtually painless cannula is inserted automatically once the pod is placed on the skin, and insulin delivery is con-

trolled wirelessly by the PDM/Controller that's small enough to be stored in a pocket, backpack, or purse. The pump is used in conjunction with the blood glucose monitoring system, which has been life-changing for her. "It alarms when I'm low and alarms when I'm high."

According to Milford Regional's Diabetes Nurse Caron Gruposso, Jessica has really thrived. "The biggest key to Jessica's success has been her patience navigating the technology and accepting sugars may not always be at her goal. She understands it's best to look at patterns and not focus on one incident."

The 37-year-old mother of one has certainly embraced the technology. "The insulin pump has really helped my A1C so much- it went from 7.3 to 6.3 with

within first three months of use - which is a really big improvement."

An avid beach goer, Castillo loves not having to worry about disconnecting the pump. "I love that I can swim with my pump and can take a shower with it too, which is super convenient."

Castillo's advice for others who are just finding out they have Type 1? "Take one day at a time and try not to stress about everything. You're going to have difficult days and that's okay."

For more information or to schedule an appointment with Milford Regional Diabetes Education, please call 508-381-3092.

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Do you have a topic that you would like to see covered in this newsletter? Please email your idea to: rkagno@milreg.org