

November 14, 2006

DIABETES: TYPES AND TREATMENT

What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic illness that affects more than 800,000 people, or 8.73 per cent of Ontario's population. About one in 20 Canadians will develop diabetes. More than 60,000 new cases are diagnosed annually in Ontario.

The exact causes of diabetes are unknown. In most cases, both hereditary and lifestyle factors are involved.

There are two main types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. A third type, gestational diabetes, is a temporary condition that occurs during pregnancy.

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas is unable to produce insulin. It is usually diagnosed in children and adolescents. Approximately 10 per cent of people with diabetes have type 1 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or when the body does not effectively use the insulin that is produced. It usually develops in adulthood, though children can develop type 2 diabetes as well. Type 2 diabetes accounts for approximately 90 per cent of people with the illness.

If left untreated or improperly managed, diabetes can result in a variety of complications, including heart disease, kidney disease, eye disease, impotence and nerve damage.

Insulin Pumps

An insulin pump is a small mechanical device about the size of a pager that is worn outside the body, often on a belt or in a pocket. It pumps insulin into the body through a narrow tube or very fine needle inserted under the skin. The pump is programmed by the pump user to deliver insulin at a steady rate based on the individual's insulin needs. A top-up of insulin for meals or high blood sugar readings between meals can be manually programmed into the pump by the user. When combined with frequent self-blood glucose monitoring, it is possible to achieve excellent blood sugar control with pump therapy, while at the same time allowing more flexibility to their lifestyle. People using an insulin pump take several blood tests every day and estimate their intake of carbohydrates and calories so that they can program the pump to deliver the right amount of insulin.

Assistive Devices Program

Children 18 years and under with type 1 diabetes receiving intensive insulin therapy will be eligible to apply to the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) insulin pump and supplies program if they are not having success with multiple daily insulin injections and are willing and able to use an insulin pump to monitor their blood glucose.

In order to be considered for ADP funding assistance, the individual and his/her family/caregiver will have demonstrated to a paediatric diabetes assessment team an ongoing commitment to blood glucose monitoring and the safe and appropriate use of the insulin pump. The requirement to participation in an insulin pump education program and regular diabetes clinic attendance are also included in the established eligibility criteria.

Diabetes Strategy in Ontario

The \$53 million Ontario Diabetes Strategy is focused on diabetes education, early intervention and effective prevention of complications.

Ontario's diabetes strategy includes the following initiatives:

The Pediatric Diabetes Initiative (PDI) for children with type 1 diabetes was established to make appropriate education, treatment and follow-up resources available to children with diabetes and their parents at 34 regional programs across Ontario

The Diabetes Complications Prevention Strategy (DCPS) was created to provide basic-level diabetes education programs in southern Ontario.

The Ontario Aboriginal Diabetes Strategy was developed to address the high rates of diabetes and related complications in Aboriginal people living in Ontario.

The Northern Diabetes Health Network (NDHN) was established to address the high rate of the disease and lack of services for it in Northern Ontario. The network funds 39 diabetes education programs in large and small northern communities.

Diabetes Education

Educating patients is essential in the treatment of diabetes, and people with diabetes are encouraged to take an active role in the day-to-day management of their own health care. Self-care, however, requires that patients have certain skills. These can be learned at one of Ontario's more than 50 Diabetes Education Centres, many of which are located in hospitals.

At each centre, a team of educators is available to teach diabetes patients skills that help them care for themselves. This team has a physician, a nurse and a dietitian. It may also have a social worker, clinical psychologist, chiropodist, pharmacist and/or physiotherapist.

As well as promoting self-care, the team develops a special management plan for each patient with the aim of relieving diabetes symptoms, preventing or treating complications, and improving the quality of life.

For more information on diabetes, please visit the HealthyOntario.Com website at:
www.healthyontario.com/features/diabetes.htm

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