DIABETES SELF-MANAGEMENT HEALTH TIPS

As you learn about your diagnosis of diabetes, please know that your healthcare team is committed to helping you enjoy many more years of healthy, active life. Diabetes is a chronic disease that is BEST MANAGED BY YOU, with support from your family, friends, and healthcare team. Research tells us that patients themselves are in the best position to know what they need to manage their health. There are 8,760 hours in a year, and only a handful of hours are spent with the healthcare team. So knowing what to do, and doing it, is essential to maintaining your health.

Most persons think of diabetes as a disease of high blood sugar, but for many persons it is associated with high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Controlling ALL of these factors is important to REDUCE the risk of developing the major complications of diabetes: blindness, foot disease, kidney failure, heart attack, and stroke. IN FACT, the major cause of disability and death in diabetes is heart disease and stroke. For many persons with diabetes, controlling blood pressure and cholesterol, taking aspirin, and NOT smoking are the most important steps that they can take.

SCREENING for complications is important to determine whether you already have eye, foot, or kidney disease. If you do, you may need to have more frequent follow-up visits, new, medications, or other treatments.

The following HEALTH TIPS SUMMARY is a guide to the essentials of diabetes care. Each person with diabetes is unique. We would like to help you develop the confidence and motivation to use your skills and knowledge to be the expert decision-maker in your diabetes management.

Protect yourself. Take responsibility for the following:

Smoking: If you smoke or use tobacco, **STOP!** Please talk to your healthcare team about what steps you can take. Benefits start immediately.

Influenza – in season: Get a YEARLY vaccination. Being vaccinated last year doesn't protect you this year. Getting a flu vaccination doesn't give you the flu.

Pneumococcal vaccination: Once in lifetime. However, if you were vaccinated more than 5 years ago, talk to your provider about whether you need a second one.

Aspirin: Aspirin decreases the risk of heart attacks for many persons—ask your health provider if there is a reason you should not take this medication.

Nutrition and Exercise: Following an appropriate diet and exercise are cornerstones of diabetes management. Work with your healthcare team to develop a plan that is right for you!

Medications: Carry a list of your current medications.

Access this document for downloading at
http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/DM/P/DMHealthTips.pdf

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ABCs of Diabetes

It is important for you to know what target values for blood sugar, blood pressure and blood cholesterol are best for you! This is best determined by you and your healthcare team, based upon factors such as your age, your general health, whether you have complications of diabetes, and what the potential side effects of medications are for you.

A1c- Hemoglobin A1c is a 2-3 month average of your blood sugar level. Know your target number!

Target		*Current*	

Blood Pressure: Controlling blood pressure is the most effective treatment for preventing cardiovascular disease in persons with diabetes. Check your blood pressure at home. Have your blood pressure checked at every doctor's visit. Know your target level!

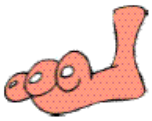
Target		*Current*	

Cholesterol: Know your cholesterol level goal to protect your heart!

	Good (HDL)	Bad (LDL)	Triglycerides
Target			
Current			

Eyes: Know whether or not you have signs of diabetes related eye disease (retinopathy), and establish a schedule for a dilated (drops in your eyes) eye examination by an eye specialist (optometrist or ophthalmologist). Ask your health provider how often you should have an eye examination. Frequency of eye exams also depends on whether you have other eye conditions such as glaucoma or cataracts.

Feet: Look at your feet daily. Tell your health provider about any changes. Have your health provider look at your feet at each visit. Symptoms of pain and numbness in your feet are not always present, so ask your provider whether you have signs of blood vessel or nerve damage in your feet. If you have blood vessel or nerve damage, you are at higher risk for developing severe foot conditions and should be under the care of a foot specialist.



Kidney Function: Protein in urine is an early sign of kidney disease. Know whether you have protein in your urine or more serious kidney disease. Your health provider can determine this from a urine and blood test. If you have protein in your urine, this may help determine your A1c and Blood Pressure target goals. Also, your health provider may want to consider certain medications for you.

Sick Day Management: Common illnesses can cause problems for people with diabetes. When you are sick, check your blood sugar every few hours. If your blood sugar remains over 250 or is repeatedly below 70, contact your healthcare team or go to the hospital. Take your insulin or diabetes pills unless you cannot take any food or liquid. Drink liquids every hour to avoid dehydration.