

Healthy Choices

A Newsletter for Canadians about Heart-Smart Health Choices

Volume 2, Issue 1

The
DIABETES
Issue!

What are the Consequences of Diabetes?

If diabetes goes uncontrolled it can lead to a number of serious complications including heart disease, renal disease (problems with the kidneys), eye problems, impotence and nerve damage. However, proper blood sugar control and healthy lifestyle choices can help you avoid or delay these health problems.³ Better yet, making all the healthy lifestyle choices recommended in this newsletter can help prevent pre-diabetes from ever turning into diabetes.⁴

Where can I get more information on diabetes?

The first place you can turn for information on diabetes, its prevention and management is your doctor, nurse, pharmacist and dietician. Not only are they extremely knowledgeable about the condition, but they are aware of your individual health needs and will be able to tailor the information they provide to you.

The Canadian Diabetes Association is a charitable organization whose mission is to promote the health of Canadians through diabetes research, education, service and advocacy. They have offices in over 150 communities across Canada, and their website is accessible at www.diabetes.ca.

The American Diabetes Association is another non-profit organization that strives to prevent diabetes, work towards a cure and improve the lives of all people affected by the disease. Their website is accessible at www.diabetes.org.

Health Canada has a lot of information on a wide range of medical conditions, including diabetes. Their website is accessible at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dc-ma/diabetes/index_e.html.

This booklet has been created as educational and support material. It is not intended to replace the advice of a physician or other healthcare professionals. Your doctor or pharmacist is your best resource for information on diabetes.

References:

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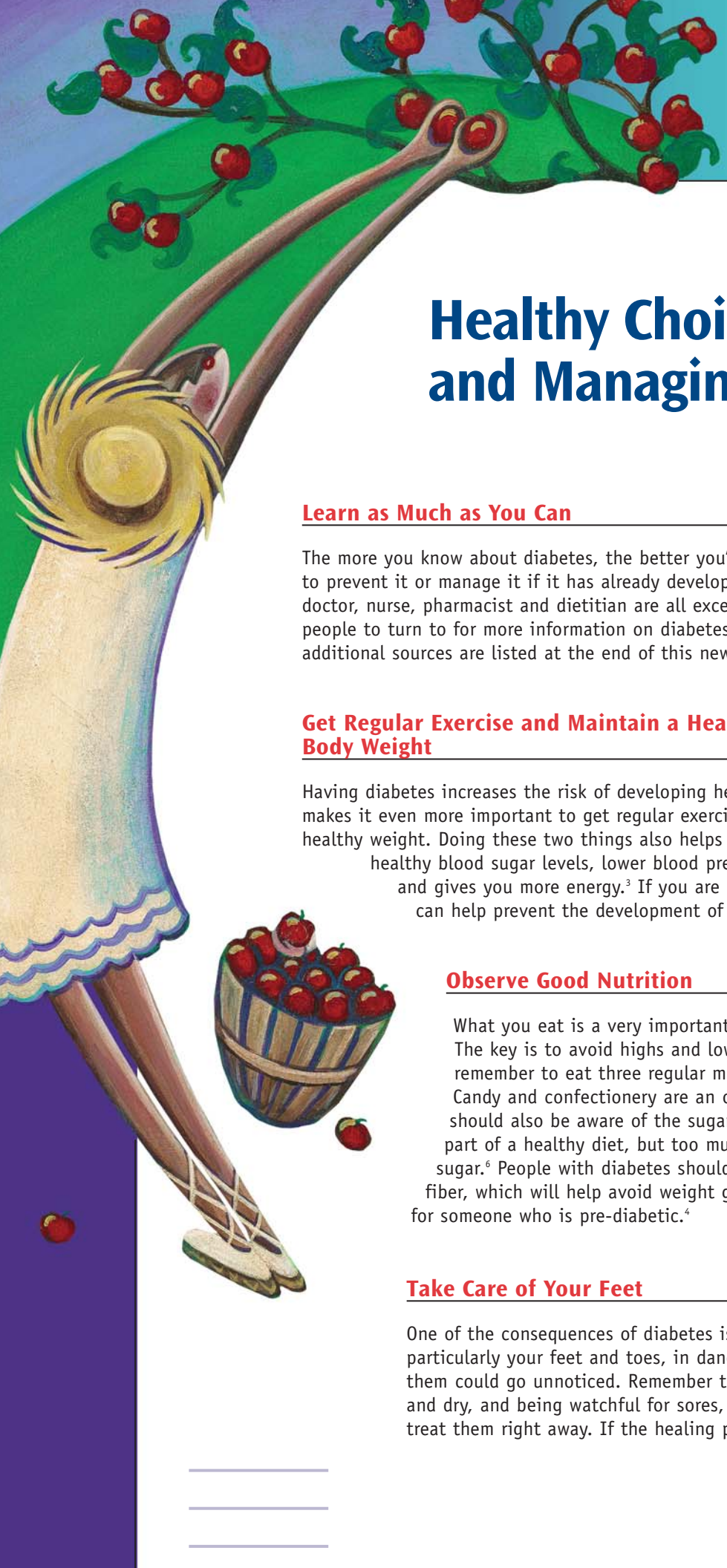
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What is Diabetes?

People who have diabetes either cannot produce insulin (type 1 diabetes) or cannot use the insulin that their body produces (type 2 diabetes).¹ Insulin is a hormone that your body needs in order to convert the sugar and starch from the food you eat into energy that your body can use. The Canadian Diabetes Association estimates that 2 million Canadians currently have diabetes, and that by the year 2010, that number will rise to 3 million.²

There is no single cause of diabetes, but certain factors can put people at risk of type 2 diabetes, such as being overweight, which can result from not getting enough exercise and not eating a healthy diet.³ Before people develop type 2 diabetes, they pass through a period in which they are “pre-diabetic”, or at risk of developing diabetes. Making healthy choices at this stage can seriously reduce your risk of developing diabetes.⁴ Making healthy choices if you already have diabetes can help keep the condition under control and protect you from the health problems diabetes can cause.¹

Recently, researchers in the medical field have noticed that people with type 2 diabetes tend to have a clustering of other factors, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity that is centered around the waist, that put them at risk of heart disease.⁴ These people have all the more reason to adopt heart-smart lifestyle changes.



Healthy Choices in Preventing and Managing Diabetes

Learn as Much as You Can

The more you know about diabetes, the better you'll be able to prevent it or manage it if it has already developed. Your doctor, nurse, pharmacist and dietitian are all excellent people to turn to for more information on diabetes.³ A few additional sources are listed at the end of this newsletter.

Get Regular Exercise and Maintain a Healthy Body Weight

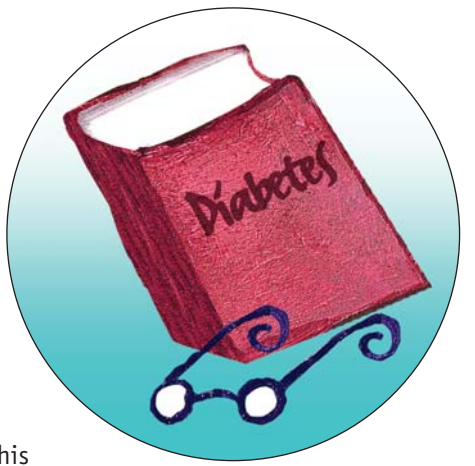
Having diabetes increases the risk of developing heart disease. This makes it even more important to get regular exercise and maintain a healthy weight. Doing these two things also helps your body maintain healthy blood sugar levels, lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol and gives you more energy.³ If you are pre-diabetic, these activities can help prevent the development of diabetes.⁴

Observe Good Nutrition

What you eat is a very important part of maintaining healthy blood sugar levels. The key is to avoid highs and lows in your sugar intake. In order to do this, remember to eat three regular meals a day and limit the amount of sugar you eat. Candy and confectionery are an obvious source of sugar, but people with diabetes should also be aware of the sugar contained in fruit and fruit juice. Some fruit is a part of a healthy diet, but too much can lead to an unhealthy increase in dietary sugar.⁶ People with diabetes should also adopt a diet that is low in fat and high in fiber, which will help avoid weight gain.³ All of these dietary choices are also important for someone who is pre-diabetic.⁴

Take Care of Your Feet

One of the consequences of diabetes is poor circulation. This puts your extremities, particularly your feet and toes, in danger of loss of feeling, meaning that damage done to them could go unnoticed. Remember to take good care of your feet, keeping them clean and dry, and being watchful for sores, cuts and scrapes. If you do have any of these, treat them right away. If the healing process is taking longer than usual, speak to your doctor.³



Monitor Your Blood Pressure and Cholesterol

People who are pre-diabetic or who have diabetes may also have high blood pressure and high cholesterol.^{3,4} These three conditions will seriously increase a person's risk of developing heart disease, so it is very important to keep blood pressure and cholesterol under control through healthy dietary and lifestyle choices, and by taking your medicine as directed, if it has been prescribed by a doctor.³

Quit Smoking



Diabetes already increases the risk of heart disease³ and smoking makes it worse. Smoking can also interfere with good blood circulation, which is already affected in people with diabetes. One of the best choices a person can ever make for their heart health and their general well-being is to quit smoking.

Monitor Your Blood Sugar

Testing your blood sugar regularly will help you avoid periods of very high and very low sugar levels, and will help you see how the lifestyle choices you are making (such as exercising more or losing weight) are affecting your diabetes.³ There are dozens of blood sugar monitors on the market. Some have large displays that make it easier to see the results of a reading and others can store a great deal of information, allowing you to track your blood sugar over time. Your doctor and pharmacist can help you pick a monitor that is right for you.³

Take Your Medication as Directed

If you have been prescribed a medicine to help manage your diabetes, always take it as directed. If you find it hard to remember to take your medicine, speak to your doctor or pharmacist about how this can be addressed.³

