November: Diabetes Awareness

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition that causes higher than normal blood sugar levels. Individuals are diagnosed with Diabetes when their body is unable to make or utilize use insulin effectively. Insulin is a hormone made in the pancreas. The purpose of insulin is to aid sugar/glucose from moving out of the blood stream and into the cell – where the body is then able to utilize the glucose for energy.

Types of Diabetes and Symptoms

Individuals may have Type 1 or Type 2 Diabetes. Individuals with Type 1 Diabetes typically have a diagnosis before the age of 20, only about 5% of individuals diagnosed with Diabetes are Type 1. This is also referred to as insulin dependent diabetes because individuals are not able to produce their own insulin and must monitor blood sugar throughout the day to provide body with appropriate insulin to move sugar to appropriate cells. This may develop quickly in individuals and symptoms that are experienced include: increased thirst, increased urination, rapid and unexplained weight loss, extreme hunger, extreme weakness or fatigue, irritability, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, unpleasant breath, itchy skin.

Type 2 Diabetes is the most common type of Diabetes, about 90% of individuals diagnosed with Diabetes are Type 2. This is sometimes referred to as adult onset Diabetes as most individuals with this diagnosis are diagnosed after the age of 35. Individuals with Type 2 Diabetes have insulin resistance, meaning that their body may still produce some insulin the cells have developed resistance to the insulin and it is unable to move the excess blood sugar from the blood stream and into the cell. Type 2 Diabetes is common in individuals who are overweight with a more sedentary lifestyle. Symptoms for Type 2 diabetes are a slower progression which is why warning signs may be overlooked and the condition goes longer without being diagnosed/treated. Symptoms include: increased frequency of urination, feeling thirsty, extreme hunger (even while eating), increased fatigue/lethargy, blurry vision, cuts/bruises that heal very slowly, tingling, pain or numbness in hands and feet.

Tips for Preventing and Managing Diabetes

1. Diet
   a. Focus on high quality lean protein and healthy fats with every meal.
   b. Increase intake of fruits and vegetables to provide fiber, water, and aid body in optimal functioning.
   c. Shift to complex carbohydrate sources with fiber and protein. Examples: hummus, legumes/beans, whole wheat/seedy bread, steel cut oats, flaxseed tortillas, sweet potatoes
2. Exercise
   a. Aim for 150 min/week (30 min/day – 5 days/week)
   b. Combination of strength training and cardio (walking, biking, Zumba, etc.) beneficial
3. Sleep
   a. Provide your body adequate time, 7-8 hours/night, to rest, recover and repair.
   b. Sleep aids in decreasing overall stress on body, which will impact cortisol levels positively.
4. Manage Stress
   a. Constant stress can negatively impact health by impacting sleep, raising cortisol levels, and leading to poor decisions regarding food choices.
5. Healthy Weight
   a. Aim for your BMI to be less than 30.
   b. If your BMI is >30, take small steps that are maintainable long-term to slowly begin to lose weight.

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