What Are Some Common Myths About Type 2 Diabetes?

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Myths About Type 2 Diabetes: Separating Fact from Fiction

Despite the availability of vast information about type 2 diabetes, myths about type 2 diabetes abound. Let's take a look at some common misconceptions about the disease and get the facts straight.

Diabetes Is an Old Person's Disease

I was not aware of this myth until a family member was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. She was horrified to be diagnosed with "the old people's disease." Despite my being a nurse for decades, I had not heard of this myth before.

Apparently, in years past, diabetes was considered to be a disease related to aging. While older adults do have substantially higher rates of developing type 2 diabetes, the illness may arise at any age.

Years ago diabetes was classified into juvenile, what we generally refer to as type 1 diabetes and adult, type 2 diabetes. Now we know that adults and young people can develop type 2 diabetes. It usually develops after the age of thirty.

There Are Two Types of Diabetes

Diabetes is a group of disorders. Types 1 and 2 diabetes are two different types of disorders which are characterized by impaired glucose tolerance. Other conditions which are characterized by impaired glucose tolerance include gestational diabetes, impaired fasting glucose, and impaired glucose tolerance.

Diabetes Is Caused by Eating Too Much Sugar

Type 2 diabetes occurs as a result of genetic factors which interfere with insulin receptor cells in the fat, muscle, and liver. Early in the disease process, an excess of insulin is produced.

As time goes on, the insulin-producing cells become exhausted and they produce less insulin. The liver cells which are responsible for regulating glucose levels are inefficient. Blood sugar levels rise as a result. The tissues of the body are resistant to the effects of insulin.

Because so many variables impact type 2 diabetics, multiple approaches must be used to maintain optimal levels of wellness.

Diabetics Can't Eat Sugar

While many people who have type 2 diabetes use artificial sweeteners, it is not absolutely necessary. People who

have type 2 diabetes can consume all types of sweeteners and foods.

The key is to be aware of the total carbohydrate intake. If you have type 2 diabetes, ask your health care provider to recommend the amount of carbohydrates which you can consume daily.

It is healthier for everyone to limit their intake of simple sugars. Whole grain, slowly digested carbohydrates that have a low glycemic index are superior to sugars and simple carbohydrates.

If you opt to use artificial sweeteners, consider using natural ones, such as stevia, as chemically produced artificial sweeteners are not as healthy for you.

Insulin Is Not Used to Treat Type 2 Diabetes

Some individuals who have type 2 diabetes do require the use of insulin. This is most likely to happen during times of acute illness. If insulin is administered to maintain proper blood sugar levels during times of illness, it does not mean that it must be continued indefinitely.

If I Have Relatives with Diabetes, I Will Get It Too

There is a genetic component to developing type 2 diabetes, however, that does not mean that you will get it too.

If you have a sibling that has diabetes, your chance of developing it is between 7%-14%. Even if both of your parents have type 2 diabetes, your risk of having it is between 15% and 45 %. The wide range of risk may be partially related to lifestyle.

For example, if you and the rest of your relatives eat large quantities of carbohydrate-rich meals and are sedentary, your risk is likely at the higher end of their risk range if diabetes runs in your family. However, if you opt to live an active lifestyle, manage your weight, and eat a healthy diet, your risk of contracting diabetes is lower.

Many people who have prediabetes are able to prevent developing diabetes simply by controlling their weight and engaging in a regular exercise program.

If I Have Diabetes, I Will Go Blind

While diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in developed nations, it most often occurs among individuals who have type 1 or poorly controlled diabetes. If you keep your blood sugar levels well controlled, follow a healthy diet, and exercise regularly you will dramatically reduce your risk of complications which are due to diabetes. These include kidney damage and the risk for the loss of toes and legs.

See your doctor regularly. Adhere strictly to your treatment plan. If you take medications to control your blood sugar, use them as prescribed. Contact your doctor promptly if you develop an infection. See your eye doctor regularly.

Diabetes Just Effects Blood Sugar Levels

Diabetes impacts your entire body. Diabetes is a leading cause of kidney disease. It elevates your risk of developing cardiovascular illnesses. 60% of people who have diabetes also have hypertension. Hypertension is a risk factor for the development of kidney disease.

You are more likely to have unhealthy levels of cholesterol if you have a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes. If you have diabetes, your chance of developing an abnormal heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation is markedly higher than if you did not have diabetes. Keeping your blood sugar levels well controlled can help to prevent atrial fibrillation from arising. Atrial fibrillation is the leading cause of stroke. The longer that you have diabetes, the greater your chance of developing atrial fibrillation.

If you smoke, your risk of developing heart problems is higher when compared with non- diabetics.

My Activity Level Has No Impact on My Risk of Getting Diabetes

Your activity level has major impacts on your risk of developing diabetes. Exercise helps to make insulin receptor sites more sensitive to the effects of insulin. This means that your body can utilize insulin effectively.

Exercise helps you to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight is a risk factor for the development of diabetes. Exercise helps to prevent fatigue which type 2 diabetics sometimes experience.

Research indicates that a sedentary lifestyle results in elevated levels of triglycerides and unhealthy cholesterol. As a diabetic, you are already at risk for cardiovascular disease. Elevated triglyceride and LDL cholesterol levels put you at a higher risk.

I Can't Have Type 2 Diabetes. I Feel Fine.

You may experience no signs or symptoms of type 2 diabetes, but still have abnormal blood sugar levels and impaired glucose tolerance. You need to have regular checkups and blood tests in order to determine whether or not you have type 2 diabetes.

You may have type 2 if you experience excessive fatigue, wounds that do not heal well, frequent urination, excessive thirst, or frequent hunger. These are signs of type 2 diabetes. Diabetes and dizziness, blurry vision, and impotence is also common. People who have type 2 diabetes may experience frequent yeast infections or changes in sensation of the fingers and toes.

Make an appointment with your health care provider if you have signs and symptoms of type 2 diabetes, or if you have relatives who have the disease. Early treatment and maintenance of blood sugar levels within normal limits are the keys to living a long healthy life with type 2 diabetes.