

Recently Diagnosed With Type 2 Diabetes? The Treatment Landscape Is Changing

(NAPSA)—If you've recently been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, you're not alone. Nearly 21 million people in the United States (7 percent of the population) have diabetes, and it is estimated that one in three Americans born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes sometime during their lifetime.

Type 2 diabetes is a condition in which the body has elevated blood sugar, or glucose. With type 2 diabetes, the body may not make enough insulin, the insulin that the body produces may not work as well as it should, and/or the liver may release too much glucose. The goal of diabetes treatment is to regulate blood sugar in the body, but only about half of Americans with type 2 diabetes have been able to get their blood sugar to the appropriate levels.

Blood Sugar

Over time, chronically high blood sugar levels can damage the retina of the eyes, the kidneys, the nerves and the blood vessels. In fact, people with type 2 diabetes may already have diabetes-related tissue damage to the retina of the eyes or kidneys, or complications such as heart disease, at diagnosis.

The standard treatment approach has been to first make lifestyle adjustments to see if an improved diet and more physical activity can adequately lower blood sugar levels. If this fails, the next step has been to prescribe a single medication. However, this approach may lead to very slow progress in achieving control of blood sugar. Thus, patients on monotherapy may experience uncontrolled diabetes for extended periods of time if dosage adjustments are not made aggressively.

Combination Therapy

Some doctors and researchers

Making The Most Of Your Doctor's Appointments

It's important to evaluate your treatment plan with your doctor regularly to make sure you're doing everything you can to manage your condition. Here are some tips to help make the most of each visit.

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for more tips about managing diabetes.

- Review your blood sugar levels and how often your blood sugar has been higher or lower than your target
- Discuss any medications you are taking
- Ask for ideas for eating healthy and ways to be more active
- Ask how you can learn more about diabetes. It's also important to be vigilant for detection of additional risk factors as well as warning signs of the complications of diabetes:
- Blood tests for cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- A yearly eye exam for vision problems
- Regular foot checks and a complete foot exam to check for circulation
- Loss of feeling
- Sores
- An annual urine test for kidney problems
- Good oral hygiene and twice-yearly visits to the dentist for exams to detect gum disease and loss of teeth



now believe that, for some people, using combination therapy at the time of diagnosis may offer a better chance of quickly getting blood sugar levels to goal.

As the name implies, combination therapy involves using more than one drug to treat type 2 diabetes. Different treatments can help to address the different aspects of the abnormal metabolism of diabetes.

"If you've recently been told that you have type 2 diabetes, talk to your doctor to determine which approach best suits your individual

needs," said Barry J. Goldstein, M.D., Ph.D., professor of Medicine, Biochemistry and Molecular Pharmacology; director, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolic Diseases, Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, Pa. "Your doctor may suggest the earlier use of a combination of medications for your diabetes. The reason for this is to get the benefit from each medication in the combination while, at the same time, minimizing the possible side effects. Over time, most people will eventually need more than one diabetes drug, in addition to diet and exercise, to keep their blood sugar levels where they need to be."

Option For Doctors

Initial combination therapy or maintenance of combination therapy may not be appropriate for all patients. These management options are left to the discretion of the physician. Earlier use of combination therapy is an option for doctors and patients to consider. All diabetes medications should be used in conjunction with diet and exercise. Since obesity is a risk factor for diabetes, weight management is an important factor in type 2 diabetes. In addition, because some diabetes medications can cause weight gain, individuals may want to ask their doctor if a weight-neutral medication fits into their treatment plan.

Because there is no cure for diabetes, patients and doctors need to work together over the long haul to set goals for optimal blood sugar control and to minimize the risk for complications. That includes finding a treatment plan that gets blood sugar levels under control and consistently keeps them in a healthy range over a lifetime.