



Health Awareness

The Link Between Diabetes, Heart Disease And Obesity

(NAPSA)—The links are all there. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a major complication and the leading cause of death among people with diabetes.

Diabetes is a disease that affects the body's ability to take glucose (sugar) into the cells. Insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas, opens the door for glucose to get into the cells. When glucose builds up in the blood instead, it can cause problems.

Cells may become starved for energy, causing fatigue and susceptibility to infections. High blood sugar levels can affect eyes, kidneys, nerves or the heart.

An estimated 17 million Americans suffer from diabetes, and about one in three don't know it. Risk factors for premature death or disability due to diabetes include heredity, obesity, age and lack of exercise. African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and older people are particularly susceptible.

Knowing what to ask health-care providers and taking action using the National Diabetes Education Program's "ABCs of Diabetes" can help.

The ABC approach was developed because most people don't know their risk can be reduced with appropriate treatment. Research shows 65 percent of people with diabetes die from heart disease and stroke, and they die younger than the general population.

'A' stands for A1C, the hemoglobin A1C test, which measures blood glucose over three months. 'B' is for blood pressure, and 'C' is for cholesterol.

A doctor does a hemoglobin A1C test. It measures how well your

Fast Facts on the link between CVD and Diabetes

- Deaths from heart disease in women with diabetes have increased 23 percent over the past 30 years compared to a 27 percent decrease in women without diabetes.
- Deaths from heart disease in men with diabetes have decreased by only 13 percent compared to a 36 percent decrease in men without diabetes.
- People with diabetes are more likely to die from a heart attack and are more likely than those without diabetes to have a second event.

Source: National Diabetes Education Program (TM)

blood sugar has been controlled over the last 2 to 3 months. A suggested healthy A1C target number is seven or below, equaling a blood glucose of 150. The American Diabetes Association recommends blood glucose screening at least twice a year after age 45, younger for those with symptoms, a family history of the disease or other risk factors.

The "B" for blood pressure means that people with diabetes should have their blood pressure checked every time they visit their health-care provider. 130/80 is a healthy target.

And, finally, the "C" which stands for cholesterol. There are two types of cholesterol, HDL and LDL. About one-third to one-fourth of blood cholesterol is carried by high-density lipoprotein (HDL). HDL cholesterol is called "good" because a high level seems to protect against heart attack. The bad cholesterol, LDL, builds up and

clogs the arteries. The ADA recommends that people with diabetes have their cholesterol tested annually. A healthy target is an LDL of 100 mg/dl, and an HDL of over 40 mg/dl.

Even relatively small improvements in blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure and weight will decrease the risk of CVD. Detecting diabetes early lets people take precautions.

The same steps needed to control blood glucose, work for controlling blood pressure and cholesterol. Here are some recommendations:

- Exercise 30 minutes daily
- Eat less fat and salt
- Eat more fiber—choose whole grains, fruits, vegetables and beans
- Stay at a healthy weight
- Stop smoking

To help people with diabetes manage their condition and prevent complications, pharmaceutical company Pfizer and the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration have created a health care initiative called "Florida: A Healthy State." The program aims to educate people about chronic health conditions and uses the resources and expertise of major medical centers, federally qualified health centers and physicians across the state. The program uses state-of-the-art software to track and coordinate patient care and provides specialized health care services. People with diabetes and CVD work with a "care manager" to keep track of their blood sugar levels, diet and exercise. A goal is to expand this innovative program to other states.

To learn more about diabetes, visit the American Diabetes Association Web site, www.diabetes.org.