



SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH



Joslin Diabetes Center Offers Tips for Living Well with Diabetes

(NAPSA)—Are you among the more than 18 million Americans with diabetes? Are you doing all that you can to avoid future complications such as heart disease, kidney failure and blindness?

Experts at the Boston-based Joslin Diabetes Center, an internationally recognized diabetes research, care and education institution affiliated with Harvard Medical School, say getting involved with your own care, and knowing how well your treatment plan is working, is crucial to diabetes management. “Regularly monitoring your blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure—and keeping them at or below target levels—along with periodic eye and foot exams and kidney function tests help to prevent or slow diabetes complications,” says Martin J. Abrahamson, M.D., Medical Director at Joslin Diabetes Center and Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Joslin experts recommend that all people with diabetes be aware of their results on these tests to help manage diabetes:

- **A1C Test:** This important blood test reflects the average blood glucose reading for 8-12 weeks before the test. This test, done by a health professional, gives a comprehensive snapshot of your diabetes management and should be done every 3 to 6 months. Joslin recommends a target A1C value of less than 7.0 percent. The A1C should be as close to normal as possible without increasing the risk of other complications, such as hypoglycemia (low blood glucose). If your A1C is elevated, increasing physical activity, losing weight and talking to your physician about altering medications may help.

Six Tests to Help You Manage Your Diabetes

A1C Test: Check 2-4 times annually.

Blood Pressure Test: Check at least 2 times annually or at each medical visit.

Lipids Test: Check at least annually.

Urinary Microalbumin: Check at least annually to detect the earliest evidence of kidney disease.

Eye Exam: Check at least annually.

Foot Exam: Check at least annually.



- **Blood Pressure:** Checking blood pressure and treating elevated levels is important to reduce the risk of blood vessel damage. Because high blood pressure is a silent killer, it is important to have it checked by your healthcare team at each appointment, and at least twice yearly. Your blood pressure should be less than 130/80. Physical activity, losing weight, quitting smoking and medications can help lower blood pressure. Your healthcare team will determine which of these is most appropriate for you.

- **Urinary Microalbumin:** To detect the earliest evidence of kidney disease, your doctor should check your urine microalbumin levels at least annually. The normal albumin level in the urine is less than 30 mg. Keeping your A1C and blood pressure at target levels is the best way to prevent and treat albuminuria. Your physician can prescribe specific medications to treat high levels of microalbumin.

- **Lipids:** Monitoring your blood fat levels annually is impor-

tant because diabetes and high fat levels pose significant risk factors for heart attack and stroke. There are two types of cholesterol: HDL (the “good” cholesterol that protects against heart disease) and LDL (the “bad” kind that can damage your heart). Your LDL levels should be below 100, and even under 70 for those at very high risk. This can be achieved by physical activity, losing weight, eating a diet lower in saturated fats and, if prescribed by a physician, taking cholesterol-lowering medications. Joslin recommends HDL levels of greater than 40 for men, and greater than 50 for women. Triglycerides, another blood fat, should be below 150 mg/dl.

- **Eye Exam:** Diabetes puts people at risk for cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of blindness. An annual dilated eye exam can identify eye complications early on. If your doctor finds early signs of eye disease, laser eye surgery, contact lenses, glasses and medications may be recommended. Keeping your A1C level on target, controlling blood pressure and quitting smoking also can help prevent vision loss.

- **Foot Exam:** Because diabetes can affect the circulation and impair sensation (neuropathy), have your feet checked at least annually for altered sensation, circulation problems or infection.

For more information, visit Joslin’s Web site at www.joslin.org or call toll-free 1-800-JOSLIN-1 for a free information packet. There are Joslin-affiliated Centers across the U.S. To locate one near you, see the list at: www.joslin.org/locations.