

Powerful Patient 19

Host: Joyce Graff, <http://powerfulpatient.org>, editor@vhl.org 800-767-4845

Diagnosing and Managing Diabetes

Joyce talks with Tina Gruner, Registered Dietitian (RD) and Certified Diabetes Education (CDE). An increasing number of people are confronted with diabetes and are struggling to keep it under control. Ms. Gruner is part of a community medical group t

1) About Our Guest

Tina Gruner is a Registered Dietitian (RD), and Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE). She has 20 years of experience working with people to help them manage their health. She is currently working with Mountain View Medical and Surgical Associates in Madras, Oregon. This community medical group provides coordinated medical care, helping people with diabetes and other endocrine conditions to handle all aspects of their health, from general medicine and podiatrist to nutrition.

<http://www.cascadehealthcare.org/MountainView/media/press-releases/2008/new-endocrinology-care-and-diabetic.aspx>

2) Suspecting Diabetes

What clues should lead you to suspect that you might have diabetes?

- Do you have one or more family members with diabetes?
- Do you experience extreme thirst? Or frequent urination?
- Do you crave sugar?
- Have you recently experienced an unexpected weight loss?

Any of these should lead you to speak with your general doctor and ask about a test of your fasting glucose levels. This test will show the level of sugar in your bloodstream in the morning before you have eaten, which would likely be the lowest level for the day. If the doctor says that you have diabetes, or a pre-diabetic condition, then you should meet with a diabetes educator to learn how to manage this condition.

3) About Diabetes

Diabetes is the inability of your pancreas to supply insulin in the right proportions to your digestive system, to process carbohydrates and make them available to your cells. In Type 1 Diabetes, the pancreas ceases to make insulin at all. This most often happens in childhood, but

may also happen in adulthood as the result of a virus attacking the pancreas, or surgery to remove the pancreas. These people will need to take insulin as a supplement.

In Type 2 Diabetes, the pancreas is still producing some insulin, but not enough. These people may or may not need supplemental insulin. All people with Diabetes need to monitor their blood sugar. The worst long-term effects of diabetes come from having too much sugar in the bloodstream for too long.

It is also possible that a cyst or tumor in or near the pancreas might be blocking the delivery of insulin or other digestive enzymes into the digestive tract. If you are diagnosed with diabetes, it would be a good idea to have a scan of the pancreas to make sure there are no structural abnormalities that might be causing the condition.

4) In the Family

There are genes that may cause people in a family to have diabetes. There are also other conditions that can create diabetes as a symptom of another underlying cause.

Von Hippel-Lindau, for example, causes cysts and tumors in the pancreas. It is not unusual for these cysts or tumors to obstruct one or more of the tiny ducts that deliver insulin and other pancreatic enzymes to the digestive tract. Even if the enzymes are being produced, if they don't get delivered to the right place at the right time, they are effectively missing, and the digestion doesn't work properly.

Without these enzymes, your body is unable to break down the food you eat into the right building-blocks needed by the cells. You might be eating a lot of food, but your cells might still be starving for nourishment. If your body is producing too much insulin, it can signal your body to store the food rather than using it, causing weight gain.

We often make light of digestive complaints. Everyone has digestive complaints periodically. But if you have symptoms over a sustained period of time, you should keep a log for at least a week and then speak with your doctor about getting screened for diabetes and pancreatic insufficiency, to rule out any shortages of these essential enzymes and hormones.

5) What problems do you have?

When you have a problem, write it down – date, time, what you ate within the last hour, what activities you have been doing for the previous hour.

Once you have information written down for at least a week, you should begin to see a pattern. Are you have troubles with certain foods? Or certain kinds of foods? Or stress?

Armed with this information, you will be in a much better position to have a fruitful conversation with your doctor.

6) **Managing Diabetes**

The better you are able to keep your sugar level steady, the better your health is likely to be.

There is a great deal of information available concerning diabetes. A large number of people are affected, and information is not difficult to find. However, what is difficult is trying to calculate what would be the right eating plan for you, with your likes and dislikes, and your busy life.

A diabetes educator is prepared to listen to what you do today, and help you make the modifications that will result in an eating plan that you find satisfying and enjoyable, and that will help you maintain the right balance of blood sugar.

Tina shared with us Seven Self-Care Behaviors important to everyone living with diabetes. In fact they are good hints for everyone!

- Healthy Eating
- Being Active
- Monitoring
- Taking Medication
- Problem Solving
- Reducing Risks
- Healthy Coping

http://www.dlife.com/dLife/do/ShowContent/7_Self-Care_Habits/7_Self-Care_Behaviors.html