

Ask The Dietitian

What's The Download On Diabetes?

(NAPSA)—**Q: I keep hearing more about the rise of diabetes. Why is that?**

A: According to the American Diabetes Association, approximately 17 million people in the United States have diabetes, with one million new cases of the disease diagnosed each year—this is an increase of 40 percent over the



Rachel Agnew

past 10 years. The rise in diabetes cases is linked to the increasing obesity rate. Being overweight can aggravate insulin resistance and impair glucose disposal.

Q: Who's at risk for diabetes?

A: People at risk include those with a family history of diabetes, and certain ethnic populations, such as African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Overweight or obese adults and children are also at risk for type 2 diabetes. The incidence of diabetes also rises with age. More than 10 percent of people over the age of 65 have diabetes. Fortunately, online tools, such as Nature Made's Diabetes Risk Calculator, can help determine risk factors by evaluating diet and exercise regimens and hereditary factors. This calculator is available at www.naturemade.com after setting up a free Wellness Advisor account.

Q: I've heard that diabetes can lead to other health problems. Is this true?

A: Yes. Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults 20 to 74 years old. Adults with diabetes also tend to be overweight, more prone to high blood pressure and higher cholesterol levels, leading to heart disease death rates about 2 to 4 times higher than adults without diabetes. However, these health risks can be significantly reduced with tight glycemic (blood sugar) control. Diabetes can be successfully managed and incorporated into any lifestyle.

Q: What are the signs of diabetes?

A: Early symptoms may include increased thirst, increased hunger, fatigue, increased urination (especially at night), weight loss, blurred vision and sores that do not heal.

Q: I was recently diagnosed with diabetes. Now what?

A: Diabetes can be successfully managed. There are proactive steps you can take to lower the risk for complications. Assemble a "starting lineup" of health care professionals, including a primary care physician, a certified diabetes educator to teach self-care, a registered dietitian to help design a meal plan that's right for you and an ophthalmologist to screen for diabetic retinopathy. There are also new

tools that help people with diabetes get the nutritional support they may need, such as Diabetes Health Pack from Nature Made. It includes a vitamin supplement regimen that helps people with diabetes obtain essential nutrients that they may be lacking.

Q: I have diabetes. Is there anything I can do to help maintain my health?

A: Yes! Regular exercise and a healthy diet help control blood pressure and promote a healthy weight. Losing just 8 percent of body weight can significantly improve blood sugars and lipid profile (cholesterol, triglycerides). And eating right helps control cholesterol, which can reduce cardiovascular complications by 20 to 50 percent.

Q: Where can I get more info about diabetes?

A: The Internet provides a great wealth of information on diabetes. For information on diabetes as well as general nutrition, here are a few sites to visit:

American Association of Diabetes Educators—www.aadenet.org
American Diabetes Association—www.diabetes.org

National Diabetes Education Program—www.ndep.nih.gov

Nature Made—www.naturemade.com/diabetes

Rachel Agnew is a registered dietitian and continuing education specialist for Pharmavite LLC.