

Take Charge — Manage Diabetes

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Food And Family
Features Editor

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — Diabetes management guidelines have changed recently, but don't count on your doctor for up-to-date advice.

"Lots of physicians are not following the old recommendations, let alone the new ones," said Marian Pounder, who led a recent workshop at the Berks County Extension.

"You must take diabetes seriously. Diabetes is a very silent killer that can affect every organ system in the body, but does not need to if you use the right tools," Pounder said.

Diabetes has increased 33 percent from 1990 to 1998 among young people. An alarming increase of 76 percent has been diagnosed in those between 30-39 years of age.

Several workshop attendees shared incidents that put their lives in risk because of the mismanagement of health profes-

sionals.

"Take charge of the management of your diabetes. You live with it 24 hours a day. It does not go away when your on vacation," Pounder said.

Medicines are complicated and may contradict each other, which can result in diabetes complications.

"Be an advocate for yourself or a friend or family member who has diabetes," Pounder said. "Ask questions. Demand changes if procedures contradict what you read."

It's important for diabetics to wear identification at all times. It's a lifeline to protect you if you are in a car accident or have a medical problem. Glucose water is standard procedure for hospitals admitting accident victims, but dangerous for diabetics. There are other choices for diabetics.

Have a list of medications, operations, and medical history to hand to doctors and health care workers.

New clinical recommendations lowered the HBA from 7 to 6.5. Lower target levels of blood sugar are 110 before eating and 140 two hours after eating.

"Medication is not the answer. Lifestyle changes are," Pounder said. "There is not a food that cannot be fitted into your meal plan, but it is important to understand serving sizes and the need to count carbohydrates and sugar content."

"Everything breaks down to sugar. No-sugar added ice cream still has calories. You must read labels. The labels may read sugar-free but contain sugar alcohol."

"Any word ending in 'ose' means sugar in some way, shape or form," Pounder said of labels.

Don't just read sugar contents. Butter, margarine, and other fats must be used in moderation.

"People respond differently to foods. That is why testing is necessary. It's like a lie detector test," Pounder said.

Taking control of diabetes includes the following tips.

- One aspirin a day is recommended for people with diabetes.
- Physical activity helps. Blood pressure problems are often associated with diabetes. Get your blood pressure in the proper range.
- Canned foods are high in salt. Fresh is best; frozen



Marian Pounder, R.N., explains the importance of managing diabetes during a workshop at Berks County Extension.

next, followed by canned.

- Get an annual eye exam.
- Check feet regularly. Diabetics can lose feeling in their feet.
- If you are a diabetic, have your blood glucose levels checked every three to four months. Low blood sugar is anything below 60.
- Be prepared at all times. Carry Lifesavers or hard candy

to chew not chocolate or soft candy.

- If you are medication and still have blood sugar above 200, the medication is not working and another option should be explored.

Pounder stressed the importance of knowing the proper way to use a monitor and know what your blood sugar should be.

Some diabetics complain that regular medical checkups are too expensive. Pounder asks, "Can you put a price on life and the quality of life you want?"

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