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Health News From Cleveland County HealthCare System

PREVENTING DIABETES

Make healthy choices now to avoid problems later

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SHELBY - Diabetes affects almost 26 million people in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, the CDC estimates that as many as 1 in 3 U.S. adults could have diabetes by 2050 if current trends continue.

"We know that Type 2 diabetes has a strong genetic component," said Neeraj Ashri, MD, an endocrinologist with Cleveland County HealthCare System. "However, even if you are predisposed to get diabetes later in life, what you do - your lifestyle - can bring it on earlier or postpone it." Dr. Ashri specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of conditions related to the endocrine system, which includes the pancreas - the organ responsible for producing and regulating insulin.

When you eat, the body breaks down food into glucose (sugar). This sugar, also called blood sugar, is the body's main source of energy. Insulin helps move the glucose from the blood into the cells to be used for energy. Without insulin the body's cells won't accept the glucose needed to keep the body functioning properly.

Under normal circumstances your body makes just the right amount of insulin to match the food you eat. Problems occur when this process fails to work correctly.

Type 2 diabetes, the most common form of diabetes, occurs when the pancreas fails to make enough insulin as the body's cells become insulin resistant meaning they do not respond normally to insulin produced by the pancreas. "By the time a person is diagnosed with typical Type 2 diabetes," said Dr. Ashri, "they will have lost 50 - 70 percent of function of insulin producing cells in the pancreas."

One of the leading risk factors for developing diabetes is being overweight. Maintaining a healthy weight and being more physically active can help you prevent or at least delay the onset of Type 2 diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association (ADA).

Making changes to your lifestyle, especially eating habits, can be a challenge. Experts recommend making small changes, one or two at a time, to gradually improve your diet and increase your physical activity.

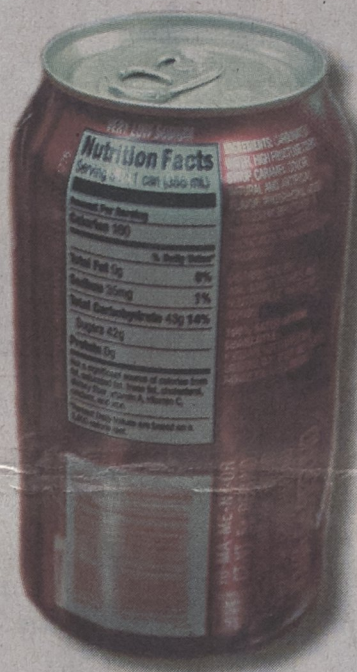


The certified diabetes educators at Cleveland Regional Medical Center's Diabetes Center work with people who have diabetes and prediabetes. They help people learn to manage diabetes, including how to make healthier choices in diet.



Dr. Ashri

"People don't realize that one can of soda has as much sugar as three slices of bread, and soda has no nutritional value."



One way to help watch your weight is to keep an eye on portion sizes. Over the years, portion sizes have increased, and it's showing up in our waists. Twenty years ago, a bagel was about three inches in diameter and contained about 140 calories. Today's bagel is twice that size and contains about 2-1/2 times the number of calories. The average cheeseburger used to be about 300 calories, but today contains more than 500. Even our dinner plates have expanded.

"How much you eat is more important than what you eat," said Dr. Ashri. "When you go to a restaurant share portions, eat for one person, not two. You can have fun, just not too much!"

A serving of meat, preferably lean meat, should be about the size of a deck of cards or if flattened out, the size of a checkbook.

Another small change you

can make to improve your diet is reduce the amount of sugar-sweetened drinks you have each day. "People don't realize that one can of soda has as much sugar as three slices of bread," said Dr. Ashri, "and soda has no nutritional value."

"Even for someone with uncontrolled diabetes, if they stop drinking soda, without changing anything else, their blood sugar will come down. Some people even have to decrease their medication.

"Water is the best thing to drink," he continued. "I do not recommend diet sodas but if you must have a soda, they are better than sugar-sweetened ones."

Learn to read labels on what you eat and drink. Sugar is a carbohydrate, so you also have to watch for total carbohydrates in some fruit juices, fruit drinks and even flavored waters. Also, pay attention to the serving size.

Ingredients are generally listed in order of how much the food contains. If any form of sugar or carbohydrate is near the top of an ingredient list there is a lot of sugar in that food or drink. In general, any word ending in "ose" is a form of sugar, like sucrose, glucose, or fructose.

Making small changes, like drinking one less soda each day, can have a big impact on your health. "The time to start making healthy changes is when you are healthy, not when you get sick," said Dr. Ashri. Start with one small change, stick with it until it becomes a habit then add another small change. You will gradually develop healthier habits that will help you lower your risk for diabetes, as well as heart disease, stroke and other health issues.

If you have diabetes or prediabetes and need some extra help improving your diet, talk with your physician about referring you to Cleveland Regional Medical Center's Diabetes Center. The Diabetes Center staff includes registered dietitians who can provide nutrition counseling and work with you to better manage your diabetes or pre-diabetes.

For more information, call 980-487-3953.

Dr. Ashri works with patients to manage diabetes and other conditions at Cleveland Endocrinology in Kings Mountain.

For more information call 980-487-2270.



Diabetes Center

The physician led Diabetes Center at Cleveland Regional Medical Center (CRMC) includes nurses and registered dietitians who are experienced, certified diabetes educators. Support groups, diabetes self-management, gestational diabetes classes as well as individual sessions for insulin pump therapy, intensive insulin management, blood glucose meter training and carbohydrate counting are offered. All classes and education training require a doctor's referral. Please talk to your doctor if you are interested in these services. For more information call 980-487-3953.

Cleveland Regional Medical Center: 980-487-3000
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