

Rambling on with Kathleen”

Diabetes

There is an increase in interest and research regarding diabetes in people with mental illness. It is reported that people with mental illness develop diabetes up to four times more often than people who don't have a mental illness. So, one may question if treatments for mental illness are causing diabetes.

Our last newsletter provided information regarding weight gain due to medications. Because some medications for mental illness may cause weight gain, many believe that weight gain, and not the medications, are what increases the person's risk for diabetes.

However, according to some reports and information, this increase in diabetes in people with mental illness is noted despite whether or not a person is taking medication. In any event, more research definitely needs to be done to continue to investigate this health concern among people with mental illness.

Diabetes is a disease in which there are alterations in blood glucose levels. Food we eat is turned into sugar/glucose for us to use as energy. The hormone insulin is produced by the pancreas. Insulin assists glucose to get into our body cells. When a person has diabetes the body does not produce enough insulin or doesn't use the insulin which causes the blood glucose/sugar to increase in the body.

Because more people with mental illness seem to be developing diabetes for whatever reasons, it is important to know the signs and symptoms.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Excessive Thirst
- Frequent Urination
- Unusual Hunger
- Dry Skin
- Blurry Vision or Vision Changes
- Tiredness
- Irritability
- Tingling or Numbness in Hands or Feet
- Sores that are Slow to Heal
- More Infections than Usual
- Unexplained Weight Change

Other concerns are risk factors for developing diabetes. Although there are genetic and environmental factors involved, there are also other risk factors to consider such as obesity, older age, physical inactivity and race. Of course we cannot change many of the

risk factors such as age, race or genetic makeup, but we can make changes in our diet and exercise to hopefully decrease those risk factors of obesity.

People with diabetes and/or a mental illness should check with a health care professional prior to starting an exercise routine. Exercise will lower blood glucose levels and blood glucose should be monitored in a person with diabetes. Exercise may also improve the muscles' ability to respond to insulin which helps more glucose get into the cells so this should also help control glucose levels. Exercise may also reduce the risk of diabetes as well.

People with diabetes also have more problems in the legs and feet so developing an exercise plan with the physician or health care provider is recommended. A physician or health care practitioner will also provide you with a treatment plan including specific instructions for foot and leg care designed especially for you. However there are basic and general guidelines for foot care for people with diabetes.

Special Foot care for people with diabetes:

- Wash feet daily with soap and water
- Dry Feet Well
- Check feet for blisters, cuts or sores and report your findings to the doctor
- Change your socks daily – Use clean socks only- not too tight or too loose
- Keep feet warm and dry
- Never walk barefoot
- Examine your shoes for anything like pebbles etc that could hurt your feet

Meal planning is also required for someone with diabetes. In addition, meal planning is helpful for those of us that wish to eat healthy in order to avoid diabetes, obesity or other health problems. If you have diabetes, it is usually recommended to visit a nutritionist or health care practitioner specially trained in the field of nutrition. However, all of us can begin to read food labels and make healthier food choices.

Prevention of, or controlling diabetes involves healthy choices now and on a regular basis. All of us need to be aware of the risk factors, signs and symptoms, and prevention tips regardless of whether or not we take medications for mental illness. Each of us is responsible for participating in maintaining our health and that includes being informed and educated on health related issues, discussing concerns with our health care providers, healthy eating habits and exercise.

For more information on this topic please contact your physician or health care practitioner. Other resources are:

American Diabetes Association

American Dietetic Association

1701 North Beauregard St.
Alexandria Va. 22311
1-800-342-2383, <http://www.diabetes.org/>*

<http://www.eatright.org/>*

Wellness Webpage by Kathleen Dunkelberger Nursing Consulting Services, LLC

This information is for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended to be medical advice. As with any program, all individuals are encouraged to seek the advice of their medical practitioner prior to starting or changing any typical practices and for further information.

Resources: ADA, Nov Nordisk Educational Pages, Eli-Lilly Wellness Information, personal and professional experience, other internet sites