



KNOW BETTER CARE

## Diabetes Education Program

# ***INTRODUCTION TO DIABETES***

If you have just learned that you have diabetes or already have diabetes and have been told that a change in therapy is needed, you may feel frightened, overwhelmed, angry, or just have many questions. We hope this information will answer your questions and help you to learn how to better manage your diabetes.

## ***WHAT IS DIABETES?***

Diabetes is a condition in which your body is not able to use food properly for energy.

Much of the food that you eat is broken down into sugar (glucose) in the stomach and intestine. The sugar (glucose) then enters the blood stream where it is carried to the rest of the body.



### **Type 1 Insulin Dependent**

- ◆ 10% of all people with diabetes
- ◆ Usually diagnosed before age 30
- ◆ Usually not over- weight
- ◆ Often has large weight loss
- ◆ Symptoms occur over a short time

### **Type 2 Non-Insulin Dependent**

- ◆ 80 to 90% of all people with diabetes
- ◆ Usually diagnosed after 40
- ◆ 80 to 90% are overweight
- ◆ Symptoms develop gradually or not at all
- ◆ Higher risk in some ethnic groups, overweight people and children!

## ***Common Symptoms***

- ◆ Thirst
- ◆ Frequency of urination
- ◆ Tiredness or fatigue
- ◆ Blurred vision
- ◆ Slow healing cuts and sores
- ◆ Frequent infections
- ◆ Tingling and/or numbness in hands/feet

## **HOW IS DIABETES CONTROLLED?**

To "control" diabetes means to keep your blood sugar as close to normal as is safe and possible for you to do. By doing so, you will decrease the symptoms you have now and may reduce your risk to develop any of the complications of diabetes in the future. Your health care team will work with you to develop a treatment plan designed to help you reach your goal of good control. Your treatment plan will include the following:

- ◆ **Meal planning** is the first step in the treatment of diabetes. Eating a well balanced diet will improve blood sugar and weight control. Our diabetes educators can help you develop a meal plan that fits your lifestyle.
- ◆ **Increasing Daily Physical Activity and Regular Exercise** is important for all of us, but more so for people with diabetes. Exercise can help weight loss, lower blood sugar, and helps your own insulin work better. If you already exercise, good! Keep it up! Discuss a safe plan for regular exercise with your doctor. Look for ways to be more active throughout your day and try gentle walking on a regular basis.
- ◆ **Self-blood sugar and ketone testing** are the ways to assess your diabetes control. This information will help you and your doctor see how your treatment plan is working. A number of easy-to-use glucose meters are available that allow you to measure your blood sugar in a very short amount of time with a simple finger prick. Your doctor or diabetes educator will help you select a machine that best fits your needs. Your doctor will also order a lab test called a glycosylated hemoglobin (A<sub>1</sub>C) every 3 to 4 months. This blood test shows what your average blood sugar was over that period of time.
- ◆ **Diabetes medications** are needed for many people with diabetes. All those with Type 1 diabetes **must** take **insulin** injections.

There are many kinds of **oral medications** to treat Type 2 diabetes and **insulin** may also be used to treat this type of diabetes. More information on your medication will be provided.

- ◆ **Diabetes education** is one of the most important parts of your treatment plan. It is not an easy task to make your treatment plan a part of your daily life. Learning about diabetes and gaining the needed self-management skills are essential to taking charge of your diabetes.
- ◆ A good diabetes health care team is important to help you gain control of your diabetes. You are the most important member of the team. Other members are your doctor, diabetes educator, dietitian, family and friends, and other health care providers.

**To learn more about the Diabetes Education Programs at the UCONN Health Center, please call the UCONN link at 860-679-7692/800-535-6232. A UCHC Diabetes Education Referral/ Order Form must be completed by your physician prior to any new appointments scheduled.**