

CHRONIC COMPLICATIONS OF DIABETES

Is diabetes serious?

The main object of treating diabetes is to prevent the appearance of complications and give the diabetic the best possible quality of life. That is why it is important to keep blood glucose as normal as possible (between 70 and 125 mg/dl) and avoid other equally important risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking and being overweight.

Long-term complications of diabetes

Diabetes may not produce any symptoms, but if it is not properly controlled, in the long run, it will affect the heart, brain, kidneys, eyes and/or feet, and lead to:

Cardiovascular diseases: such diseases are 2 to 4 times more frequent in people with diabetes, especially black Africans.

- Those affecting the heart and coronary circulation (angina and heart attack).
- Those affecting the brain and its circulation (cerebral thrombosis – blood clot in the brain).
- Those affecting the lower limbs and feet (intermittent claudication – weakness in the legs).

Eye disease: lesions in small blood vessels may cause cataracts, glaucoma or increased pressure in the eye and affect the retina, which could end in blindness.

Kidney disease: partial or total loss of kidney function may occur. Doctors can detect the initial stage by means of tests and there are effective treatments for this.

Nervous system diseases: if the nerves become affected, this may show itself as difficulty in obtaining or maintaining an erection (sexual impotence) in men, pins and needles and cramp in the feet and legs, problems in the bladder or intestine, or dizziness. This may affect 50% of diabetics 25 years after diagnosis.



The good news, however, is that all these problems can be prevented, avoided or delayed by keeping your diabetes well under control (keeping your blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol as near as possible to normal)

Diabetes Education



It is also very important:

- Never to smoke.
- To lose weight if you are overweight.
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs.
- Avoid a sedentary lifestyle and do some physical activity.
- To keep your blood pressure well under control (130/80 mmHg).
- To keep your cholesterol and triglycerides well under control.
- To eat very little animal fat.
- To have a flu jab every winter to avoid complications.

You must maintain a good relationship with your healthcare team, follow their advice, regularly keep the appointments they tell you to and inform them of any alteration or loss of vision, pains in the chest or difficulty in breathing, swelling or anything else unusual on your feet.

You may have to take quite a lot of pills every day if you want to control your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol, and not put your life at any greater risk. You need this medicine.

Don't stop taking it.