

GOOD NEWS ABOUT YOUR DIABETES

Scientists have proved that controlling blood sugar *carefully* can help prevent the long-term complications of diabetes.

A study called the Diabetes Control and Complications Trial (DCCT) compared two groups of people with diabetes:

- Those who controlled their blood sugar well enough to avoid extremes of high and low blood sugar and to feel well most of the time.
- Those who worked closely with doctors, nurses, and others to keep their blood sugar as near to normal as possible.

IT REALLY WORKED!

The extra effort paid off! People who worked harder to keep the amount of sugar in their blood near normal had fewer signs of diabetic eye, kidney, and nerve disease at the end of the 6 1/2 year study. These long-term problems were reduced by more than half. Keeping blood sugar as close to normal as possible also tended to lower the risk of heart disease and poor leg circulation.

WHO CAN BE HELPED?

The study was done only in people taking insulin, but experts agree that all people with diabetes—whether they're treated with diet pills or insulin—can lower their risk of complications by improving their blood-sugar control.

THE TRADE-OFF

But when you aim for normal blood-sugar levels, you increase the chances of overshooting the target and lowering sugar levels too far. This is true mainly if you take insulin, but it can also occur if you take

diabetes pills. In the DCCT, the group working toward normal blood sugar had three times more low blood-sugar reactions than the other group. You can learn to watch out for these reactions and prevent or correct them, but they can be dangerous if not treated quickly and properly.

One other downside: if you take insulin several times a day, controlling blood sugar more tightly can cause some weight gain because insulin helps your body store calories better.

WHAT TO DO?

Ask your doctor about the DCCT and whether a change in treatment makes sense for you. Changing your treatment plan today could make a big difference to your health in the future.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

Diabetes experts have spelled out the basic steps that all health professionals should follow for people with diabetes.

Whenever you visit your doctor or clinic, expect to discuss:

- how well your treatment plan is working
- the target glucose levels you're aiming for
- your blood glucose self-monitoring results
- any high or low blood-glucose results
- your medications
- any changes in your routine

And you should have these checked:

- your weight
- your blood pressure
- your blood glucose
- your feet
- your eyes

You should also have a *glycosylated hemoglobin* test: it provides a snapshot of how well your blood glucose was controlled over the last 2-3 months.

BETWEEN VISITS

Write down your test results and make notes about things you want to talk about.

EVERY YEAR

You should have these tests:

- cholesterol
- triglycerides
- an electrocardiogram (heart test)
- kidney function
 - creatinine in blood
 - protein in urine
- a complete eye exam by an eye doctor

ASK QUESTIONS

And remember: the most important person on your healthcare team is you!



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