

Backdoor Reading From Your Parish Nurse

November, 2009

Diabetes: An Overview

Risk Factors

- ◆ A family history of diabetes
- ◆ Age over 45
- ◆ Race or ethnic group (> in Hispanics, blacks, Native Americans and Asians)
- ◆ Metabolic syndrome
- ◆ Being overweight
- ◆ Hypertension (high BP)
- ◆ Abnormal cholesterol levels
- ◆ History of gestational diabetes

Almost everyone knows someone who has diabetes. An estimated 23.6 million Americans have diabetes, a serious, lifelong condition.

Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism—the way our bodies use digested food for growth and energy. Most of the food we eat is broken down into glucose, the form of sugar in the blood. Glucose is the main source of fuel for the body.

After digestion, glucose passes into the bloodstream, where it is used by cells for growth and energy. For glucose to get into the blood, insulin must

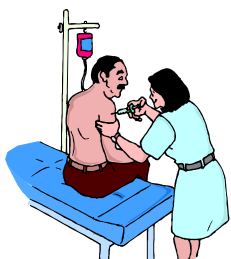
be present. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas, a large gland behind the stomach.

When we eat, the pancreas automatically produces the right amount of insulin to move glucose from blood into our cells. In people with diabetes, however, the pancreas either produces little or no insulin, or the cells do not respond appropriately to the insulin that is produced. Glucose builds up in the blood, overflows into the urine and passes out of the body. Thus, the body loses

its main source of fuel even though the blood contains large amounts of sugar.

Diabetes is widely recognized as one of the leading causes of death and disability in the US.

Diabetes is associated with long term complications that affect every part of the body. The disease can lead to blindness, heart and blood vessel disease, stroke, kidney disease, amputations, and nerve damage.



Types of Diabetes

Type I Diabetes

- ◆ The immune system turns against part of the body
- ◆ Develops most often in children and young adults.
- ◆ Must take insulin daily

Type II Diabetes

- ◆ Most common form
- ◆ Associated with older age, obesity, family history, physical inactivity and ethnicity
- ◆ Body does not use insulin effectively.

Gestational Diabetes

- ◆ Only develops during pregnancy.
- ◆ It is diagnosed based on plasma glucose series values.
- ◆ If a woman has 2 high plasma glucoses she has gest. diabetes