

Caring for an Older Adult



Diabetes and the Elderly

Older adults with diabetes face unique challenges in managing their disease. Other medical conditions and social issues can present barriers to their ability to control diabetes while enjoying a good quality of life.

Special Concerns for Older Patients

When compared to other adults with diabetes, an older person may have co-existing medical conditions, physical challenges, cognitive impairments or social barriers that can interfere with diabetes management. These concerns can include:

- Limited mobility
- Depression
- Memory impairment
- Lack of access to exercise, and
- Inability to prepare appropriate meals.

Additionally, a frail, older person has increased risk for falls.

Frequent adjustment of the diabetes treatment goals may also be required to prevent safety risks of diabetes management, such as hypoglycemia.

Goals of Caring for an Elderly Person with Diabetes

The goal in caring for an elderly person with diabetes is an individualized treatment plan with an emphasis on safety issues. Caregivers should assess the following:

- Identify barriers unique to each older person with diabetes that impair the patient's ability to self-manage the disease.
- Set appropriate goals for treatment of diabetes after consideration of the person as a whole.
- Educate and help older individuals and their caregivers in diabetes management and safety issues.

A comprehensive assessment should include screening for the presence of memory disorder, depression, physical disabilities, assessing the patient's

current knowledge about diabetes, assessing present medication regimen, assessing dietary habits, and assessing the patient's ability to follow nutritional recommendations. The patient's social support structure should also be assessed for potential referral to a social worker or a social network.

(Source: Joslin Diabetes Center)

National Diabetes Education Program materials

www.yourdiabetesinfo.org

www.ndep.nih.gov

The Diabetes Epidemic Among Older Adults

http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/FS_OlderAdult.pdf

The Power to Control Diabetes Is in Your Hands Community Outreach Kit

<http://ndep.nih.gov//publications/OnlineVersion.aspx?NdepId=NDEP-44K>

The Power To Control Diabetes Is in Your Hands (NDEP-38)

http://ndep.nih.gov/media/Power_broch_Eng.pdf

Dealing with a Diabetes Diagnosis as an Older Adult

<http://ndep.nih.gov/media/older-adult-diabetes-diagnosis.pdf>

Five Ways Older Adults Can Be More Physically Active

<http://ndep.nih.gov/media/five-ways-older-adults-active.pdf>

Leading by Example: This Grandfather Shows It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes

http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/Fathers_Day_06_Kitching.pdf

What You Need to Know About Medicare and Diabetes

<http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/MedicareandDiabetes.pdf>

Ten Ways to Shape Up Your Family Reunion to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes

<http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/ten-ways-to-shape-up-your-family-reunion.pdf>

It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes: Take Your First Step Today

http://www.ndep.nih.gov//media/Its_Not_Too_Late_Feature.pdf