



Lesson 1: What is Diabetes All About?

Getting Started

1. Review lesson plan before each session.
2. Copy handouts and follow-up questions.
3. Gather supplies.

Supplies Needed

1. 8 ½" x 11" x 2" pan, or one of similar size
2. Water
3. Sponge (one typically used for cleaning)
4. Sandpaper
5. Small bowl
6. Red dye/ food coloring (optional)

Beginning the Session

1. Introduce yourself by name and the organization that you represent.
2. Summarize the lesson by going over the objectives. Let the group know that the session will be informal and that questions can be asked at any time.

Objectives

Participants will:

1. Understand what "high blood sugar" means.
2. Learn general information about diabetes.
3. Verbalize the body parts that are affected when blood sugar is not controlled.

Script

Ask your participants: *What does having diabetes mean to you?* Gather responses and discuss responses. Diabetes affects more than 16 million Americans, and many of them do not even know they have this disease. The way to stay healthy for each and every person with diabetes, including YOU... is to **CONTROL YOUR BLOOD SUGAR (GLUCOSE) LEVELS!**

How do you know if your blood sugar is in control? Gather and discuss responses.

You must test your blood sugar to know whether or not it is in control.



Ask your participants: *How many test your blood sugar? How often do you test your blood sugar? What can happen to your body if you do not control your blood sugar?* Gather and discuss responses to these questions.

If your blood sugar level is high for long periods of time over many years, diabetes may cause major damage to the blood vessels in your eyes, kidneys, heart, and feet. You could also have diabetic nerve damage that could prevent you from feeling pain. For example, if you have a cut or sore on your foot that goes untreated because you cannot feel, your foot could become infected and need to be amputated. Also, if your blood sugar goes too high, you could immediately become sick and need emergency medical attention.

Diabetes can have serious or a life-threatening impact on your health if you do not take care of yourself. Even if you have this disease, you may still feel normal or healthy. Because of this, you may forget that there are things you need to do each day to maintain your health, such as paying attention to what you eat, taking your medications as directed, and being physically active.

There are two main types of diabetes - type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes. Most of you probably have type 2, which usually occurs in older adults. You may not have to take insulin, but many of you take tablets. Your doctor is the one who decides which treatment will work best, but it's up to you to take care of yourself and manage your diabetes. With type 2 diabetes, you cannot produce enough insulin to keep your blood sugars in control naturally-or you may not use the insulin you make very effectively. Symptoms for diabetes are not always obvious, which is why some people have the disease for many years without knowing it. Symptoms may range from only feeling tired to having excessive fatigue, thirst, hunger, and urination.

For a summary of this lesson, go over the handout "Diabetes: Just the Facts" with your audience.



Activity

This demonstration will help show how your body, as someone with diabetes, is different from someone who doesn't have diabetes. Take your pan (Figure A), and place at least enough water to cover the bottom of the pan. Tell your group that the water in the pan is like their blood after they eat a meal. Place enough red dye/food coloring in the water and swirl it around, so as to resemble blood. Take your sponge and swirl it around in the water, getting it completely soaked. Tell your group the sponge is like insulin because it moves the sugar in your blood. Next squeeze out the water in the sponge into a bowl, further reinforcing how effective the "insulin" was at removing the "blood sugar" from the "blood". Tell your group this is normal and is what happens after a person without diabetes eats a meal (containing carbohydrates).

At a Glance:

Pan with water = Blood with sugar (glucose)

Sponge = Insulin

Figure A



Now take a piece of sandpaper or a piece of regular loose-leaf paper (Figure B) and swirl it around in the pan of water (like you did with the sponge). Tell the group the sandpaper is like the insufficient/complete lack of insulin that a person with diabetes produces. Now attempt to squeeze water out of the sandpaper.

It doesn't work extremely well, i.e. the "insulin" does not remove much "sugar" from the

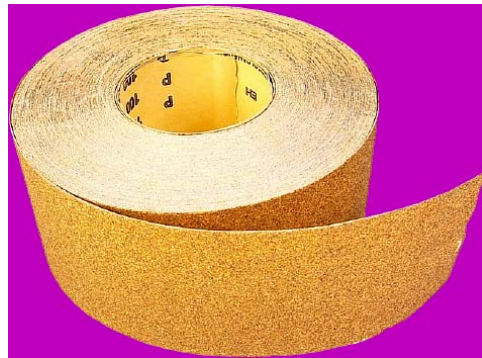


“blood.” Tell your group this is what happens after a person with diabetes eats a meal: the sugar stays in the blood because the insulin cannot get rid of it. This is why people with diabetes need to control their blood sugar with diet, medicine, and exercise!!

At a Glance:

Sandpaper (or loose-leaf paper) = little/no insulin

Figure B



The Diabetes Alphabet

We will talk about all of these messages in the coming lessons. Let's get a jump-start on learning by reciting them now. *Note to the speaker: you may find it helpful to make a poster board with these messages listed for use throughout the series.*

A for A1c Test- Check twice a year (lesson 2)

B for Blood Pressure- Check at each doctor's visit (lesson 6)

C for Cholesterol- Check once a year (lesson 6)

D for Daily Exercise- Be physically active every day (lesson 8)

E for Eating Well- Take down portions, stay on your meal schedule (lesson 3,4,5)

F for Foot Care- Check your feet for sores, blisters, or injuries every day (lesson 7)

S for Sugar Testing- Check your blood sugar daily or as recommended by your doctor (lesson 2)



References

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Diabetes – In Control Just the Facts



1. Diabetes is serious. No one has “a little bit of sugar” just like no one is “a little bit pregnant.”
2. Keep blood sugar levels in control to stay healthy and reduce your risk of complications like blindness, kidney failure, heart disease and stroke.
3. Follow a healthy eating plan to help maintain your weight or to lose weight if overweight, and to keep your blood pressure and blood cholesterol normal.
4. Be active or exercise most days of the week to help control blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol.
5. Check your blood sugar frequently with a blood sugar meter to help you control your diabetes.
6. Work with a medical team, including a doctor, dietitian, nurse, exercise specialist and/or a mental health professional to help you make healthy changes and manage your diabetes.

Adapted from : “Diabetes: What is it?” Connie Crawley, MS, RD, LD, Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist, The University of Georgia