



Lesson 6: Complicated Matters- Complications Related to Diabetes

Getting Ready

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

Supplies Needed

1. Large index cards
2. Poster board (one piece for copying the “Diabetes Alphabet”)
3. Magic marker

Beginning the Lesson

1. Introduce yourself by name and the organization you represent.
2. Summarize the lesson by giving the objectives. Let the group know the lesson will be informal and they can ask questions anytime.

Objectives

Participants will:

1. Learn benefits to keeping blood sugar under control.
2. Learn complications that can occur to the heart, eyes, kidneys, feet and teeth/gums.
3. Learn the preventive measures and avoid complications associated with diabetes.

Activities

- Game: Name That Person. See end of lesson for instructions

Script

Staying on top of your diabetes every day will help keep your blood sugar from rising too high or falling too low. It will also help prevent other health problems that diabetes may cause over the years. Today we are going to discuss many complications that can affect your body. These affect your heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, feet and gums. This information is not to frighten you, but to let you know of ways to prevent complications from happening.



To the speaker: Each complication from diabetes has a person matched with an organ. This information is for the activity later on in the lesson.

Your heart and blood vessels: (Harry's Heart)

One of the biggest problems for people with diabetes is heart and blood vessel disease. Heart disease can lead to high blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes. It also causes poor blood flow to the legs and feet. To check for heart disease, your doctor may do some tests. You may have an EKG (electrocardiogram) to check your heart and a blood cholesterol test. Have your cholesterol checked once a year. Your doctor's office should check your blood pressure at every visit. It is also important to have an A1c test done twice a year. An A1c test tells what your blood sugars have been over the past three to six months. This test can give you the big picture of your diabetes control. We discussed the A1c test in previous lessons- so this may be a review for some of you. The best way to prevent heart and blood vessel disease is to take good care of yourself and your diabetes.

Diabetes and your eyes (Earl's Eyes)

Diabetes is the main cause of blindness in adults in the United States. You should have your dilated eye exam checked once a year because you may develop eye problems and not know it. Many people do not notice symptoms since there is no pain; but some do have blurred vision after only having diabetes for a short time. Vision problems often are not noticed until the disease is well advanced, and vision cannot be restored. If your eyes are already damaged, an eye doctor may be able to save your sight with laser treatments or surgery, but not without cost and risks. The main thing to remember is to treat eye problems early. Tell your doctor right away if you have problems with your eyes, such as blurred vision, or if you see dark spots, flashing lights, or rings around lights.

Diabetes and your kidneys (Kevin's Kidneys)

Diabetes can also damage the small blood vessels in your kidneys that help filter out waste. This is called diabetic nephropathy (diabetic kidney disease). High blood pressure is associated with nephropathy. In addition, too much sugar (and sometimes too much protein) in your blood or urine can damage your



kidneys. The kidneys cannot remove waste properly. When this happens you will need to have your blood filtered of waste through a dialysis machine. A test that should be done twice a year is called a urinary micro-albumin test. This lets your doctor know the first signs of any kidney problems.

Does anybody know someone who has to go to a dialysis clinic? If someone answers yes, you might want them to tell about their experience with the person they know who has to have dialysis. To prevent this complication, it is important to maintain good control of your blood sugar. Also, make sure you see your doctor right away if you get a bladder or kidney infection. Signs of bladder or kidney infections are cloudy or bloody urine, pain or burning when you urinate, having to urinate often or in a hurry. Back pain, chills, and fever are also signs of kidney infection. Have your doctor check your urine once a year to check the health of your kidneys.

Diabetes and your nerves (Frank's Feet)

Approximately 60-70% of people with diabetes have mild to severe forms of nerve damage due to diabetes. Severe forms of diabetic nerve disease are the major cause of foot and leg amputations. Nerve damage makes it hard for your nerves to send messages to the brain and other parts of the body. If you have nerve damage, you may not be able to feel a blister or sore on your foot. The sore can become infected, and, in serious cases, the foot may have to be amputated. Warning signs of nerve damage include tingling, burning, loss of feeling (numbness), sharp pain and/or weakness. Make sure you call your doctor if you have any of those signs. To help prevent nerve damage, check your feet everyday. Use a mirror under your feet and look for any red spots, blisters, wounds or other breaks in the skin. Also, remember to take off your shoes and socks so the doctor can look at your feet. We're going to be talking more about foot care at the next lesson. Diabetes also affects other nerves that control your sweat glands, stomach, heart and sexual organs. These organs can be damaged if you do not manage your diabetes.

Diabetes and your dental health (Gus' Gums)

Uncontrolled blood sugar can lead to infections of the gums and bones around your teeth. If this problem is not treated, teeth may become loose and fall out. To help prevent damage to your gums and teeth make



sure you see your dentist twice a year, tell your dentist you have diabetes, and brush and floss your teeth each day. It is still important to prevent infection in your gums by keeping them clean even if you no longer have your original teeth and wear dentures instead.

The Diabetes Alphabet

Many of these complications we've talked about are strongly related to high blood sugar levels. By keeping your blood sugar as close to normal as possible, you may lower your chance of having the problems we just talked about. Take charge of your diabetes by doing the following:

A for A1c Test- Check twice a year

B for Blood Pressure- Check at each doctor's visit

C for Cholesterol- Check once a year

D for Daily Exercise- Be physically active every day

E for Eating Well- Take down portion sizes, stay on your meal schedule

F for Foot Care- Check your feet for sores, blisters, or injuries every day

S for Sugar Testing- Check your blood sugar daily or as recommended by your doctor

Also,

Visit your dentist twice a year

Have a dilated eye exam every year

Have a micro-albumin urine test every year

Do not smoke



Activity

Name That Person

Take the five profiles that are written on the cards and hand them out to five different people; or read the profiles aloud to your audience. Once the profile is read, let everyone in the audience know what the choices are. You can say- Is this Harry's heart, Earl's eyes, Kevin's kidneys, Frank's feet, or Gus's gums? Continue by having each card read. You can make this competitive and have each of the five people who choose the correct person earn a prize.

Hello! I'm a 70-year-old retired postman. I was diagnosed with diabetes two years ago. I woke up one day and noticed tingling in my feet. Every time I go to the doctor now I take my shoes and socks off. The doctor checks my feet for sores, ulcers and other wounds. I've already lost some feeling in my toes. My doctor usually goes over proper foot care with me. One time I visited him and he found a blister on my foot that I didn't even know it was there. My doctor said it could have gotten worse and caused an amputation of my foot. Thank goodness he checked my feet. Can you guess my name? **(Frank)'s Feet**

Hi! I'm a 63-year-old migrant worker. I have diabetes and high blood pressure. I usually have my blood pressure checked at clinics in migrant worker camps. But I really want to take charge of my disease. I live alone, so I don't cook much and tend to grab whatever food is around. I eat a lot of salty foods like potato chips, processed deli meats, and fast food. My doctor tells me that these foods I eat have a lot of salt, which can increase my high blood pressure. My doctor says that if I don't control my blood pressure, I could end up on dialysis some day. I surely don't want that. What is my name? **(Kevin)'s Kidneys**

Hello! I moved here from California, and let's just say I'm 60 something. I've had diabetes for around 15 years. I've just recently had to get glasses to read, but other than that I'm in super health. I've never followed a diabetic diet and feel just fine. I really don't understand what the big deal is about diabetes. I've



never used a glucose monitor or anything. I just take my pill every morning. This morning I was trying to read the newspaper and the page was a bit blurry. It kind of surprised me, because I have never had a problem seeing. Oh, I guess it's my new reading glasses. Can you guess my name? **(Earl)'s Eyes**

I'm 50 years old and was just diagnosed with diabetes last week. I want to learn as much as I can about diabetes. It is important for me to be around to see my grandchildren grow up. I'm about to head over to my dentist. I take good care of my teeth and see my dentist regularly. I'll have to remember to let my dentist know that I have diabetes. Can you guess who I am? **(Gus)'s Gums**

Hello! I'm 65 years old and I'm a retired teacher. I taught junior high school for 30 years and now I spend my time playing bingo and cards with my friends at the senior center. I've had type two diabetes for almost ten years now. When I first found out I had diabetes, I weighed too much and needed to lose weight. I didn't get much exercise either. I went to my doctor about two years ago to ask for help. With my doctor's approval, I began an exercise program and started losing weight. My blood sugar began to come down the more I exercised. All I did was walk around my neighborhood four days a week for 30 minutes. I felt so much better, too. Now I'm teaching an exercise class once a week at the senior center. Can you guess who I am? **(Harry)'s Heart**



References

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C for Cholesterol- Check once a year

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Also...Visit your dentist twice a year

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