WESTERN CONNECTICUT HEALTH NETWORK
DANBURY HOSPITAL • NEW MILFORD HOSPITAL

Patient Education Sheet

Reducing the Risk of Diabetes Complications

What are possible chronic complications from diabetes?

Poorly controlled diabetes, can lead to chronic complications including:

Atherosclerosis - Cholesterol build-up in blood vessels. The risks of heart attack, peripheral vascular disease, and stroke increase with this condition.

Neuropathy – Damage to nerve fibers, often seen in feet and legs. Nerve damage combined with circulatory changes and decreased sensation increase the risk of lower limb amputation.

Retinopathy – Damage to the small blood vessels in the eyes. Over time, this damage can result in blindness if not detected and treated.

Nephropathy - Damage to the small blood vessels in the kidneys. Over time, this damage can lead to kidney failure and dialysis.

What can I do to reduce my risk of chronic complications from diabetes?

The *ABC*'s of good diabetes control include:

A1c or glycohemoglobin – Usually measured 4 times each year, this blood test reflects a 2-3 month average of blood glucose. The normal range is 4-6%. The recommended target for an individual with diabetes is less than 6.5-7%.*

Blood pressure – Blood pressure should be less than 130/80.

Cholesterol – Blood lipid/cholesterol targets for individuals with diabetes are as follows:

Blood Lipid	Target
Total cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dl
HDL cholesterol ("Good" cholesterol)	Men: more than 40 mg/dl Women: more than 50 mg/dl
LDL cholesterol ("Bad" cholesterol)	Less than 70 mg/dl with history of heart disease otherwise less than 100 mg/dl
Triglycerides	Less than 150 mg/dl

*The American Diabetes Association recommends an A1c level of less than 7%. The American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists recommends a level of less than 6.5%.

Are there other steps I can take to reduce the risk of chronic complications?

Additional activities to reduce the risk of chronic complications include:

- Monitor blood glucose at home. Your health care provider can recommend when and how often to test your blood glucose.
- Take all medications as prescribed by your physician. It is very common that someone with diabetes will be on several medications for blood glucose control as well as for blood pressure and blood lipid control.
- Follow your meal plan. Your registered dietitian, and/or certified diabetes educator can help you with a food plan.
- Perform daily foot care and self-inspections. This can greatly decrease the risk of infections that can lead to amputation. Wearing properly fitted shoes and slippers helps protect your feet.

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- Engage in regular physical activity. Check with your physician before starting a new exercise program or increasing your current physical activity level.
- Meet with your physician for regular check-ups and screenings. These include screenings for retinopathy and nephropathy.
- *Do not smoke*.

Sources:

American Diabetes Association @ www.diabetes.org

American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists @ www.aace.com

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