



DIABETES MELLITUS

A LITTLE SWEET TALK



Diabetes: From understanding to treatment

The pancreas monitors your blood glucose level and secretes a hormone called insulin that helps the body's cells absorb glucose from the blood stream. Some of the glucose is used for energy, and the rest is converted into glycogen and stored as fat.

After and before eating, the level of insulin rises and falls respectively with your blood glucose. When the level falls some glycogen is converted back into glucose and released into the blood stream. Diabetes develops when there is a shortage of insulin, or when the available insulin does not work properly on the target cells. The epidemic of diabetes is on a rise. The present incidence of diabetes in India ranges from 12-18%.

INCIDENCE OF DIABETES IN INDIA 12-18%

Types of Diabetes:

● Type I Diabetes:

Also known as Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus or Juvenile Diabetes, it occurs commonly in children, teenagers or young adults. In this condition the pancreas produces little or no insulin, making insulin therapy necessary.



● Type II Diabetes:

Non Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus is the most common type, and likely in adults over age 40 and overweight people. In this case, the pancreas does not make enough insulin, or cannot use it properly. This can be controlled with oral medication, insulin, or both.

Detecting Diabetes:

If you have a family history of diabetes or a 1st degree relative, who is a diabetic, your chances of diabetes are high. Hence it is advised that you must do a screening test for diabetes, even if you don't have any symptoms.

Watch out for symptoms like extreme thirst or tiredness, frequent urination, significant weight loss, slow healing of wounds, numbness, tingling sensation of the extremities, and blurring of vision, etc.

Your doctor will ask you to take a Random Blood Sugar Test (RBS), a Fasting Blood Sugar Test (FBS), and a Post Prandial Blood Sugar Test (PPBS). You may also need to take Glycated Hemoglobin [Hb1Ac] and Ketone tests.

Managing diabetes:

Most cases of diabetes can be controlled by these lifestyle modifications:



EXERCISE

Regular exercise can lower your blood sugar, and medication too! Exercising at least thrice a week, for at least 20 to 30 minutes controls weight, reduces stress, cholesterol levels & blood pressure, and improves blood circulation.

Walk. It's convenient and doesn't need any special gear—just put on a pair of comfortable walking shoes. While walking, keep your head and neck erect, and swing your arms and legs freely. Once you're ready, try activities like swimming, dancing, cycling, and volleyball...anything you enjoy. Contact your doctor if you develop cramps or leg pain.



DIET

You don't need to stop eating everything, just change the way you eat. Replace fat, sugars and red meat with foods rich in fiber. This slows down the absorption of carbohydrates, keeps you full and maintains blood sugar levels. Consult your doctor and dietician for your ideal diet.



SMOKING

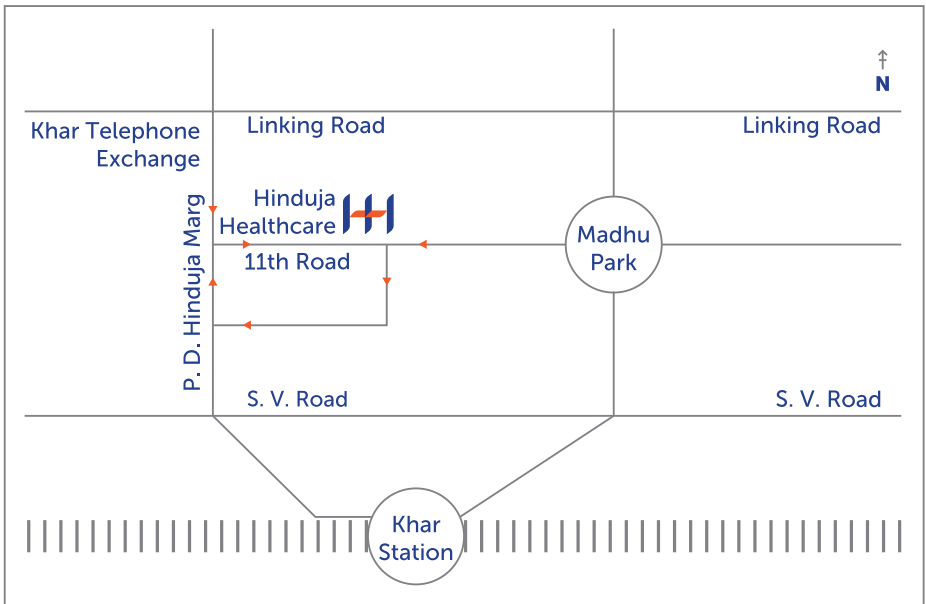
The sooner you quit smoking, the better you can manage your diabetes. If you are older than 40, have high blood pressure and cholesterol, and smoke, you're already at a higher risk of heart disease. If the small arteries that supply blood to your legs and feet get blocked, it could lead to infection, ulcers, gangrene, and even amputation.

Complications:

- **Diabetic Neuropathy** is when high blood glucose damages the nerves, leading to pain and loss of sensation in the legs, arms and hands.
- **Diabetic Retinopathy** is a disorder of the eye experienced as blurred vision, black spots, flashes, etc.
- **Diabetic Nephropathy** is a potentially life threatening as it damages the kidney cells due to enlargement.
- **Infection** is an indication of poor diabetic control, and if not treated, can lead to life threatening sepsis.

Don't skip or delay meals, overdo exercise, alcohol or medication. It causes a drop in blood sugar (70 or lower) or hypoglycemia. If you experience hunger, sweating and trembling, headaches, blurred vision and dizziness, immediately have something sweet like glucose tablets, and check your blood sugar again in 15 minutes.

With a few lifestyle changes and careful monitoring of your condition, you can lead a normal life, and may not even need medication. Even if you don't have a problem, a healthy diet and exercise will keep your body in better shape and prevent conditions like diabetes.



07.06.13

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