

Managing Diabetes: An ongoing effort
By Karla Rodas

Diabetes, the fifth deadliest disease in the U.S., can't be cured but it can be managed. The rate of type 2 diabetes is almost twice as high among Latinos than non-Latino whites.

Type 2 diabetes develops in adults and is caused because the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin.

“Sugar is the basic fuel for the cells in the body, and insulin takes the sugar from the blood into the cells. When glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells, it can cause two problems,” according to the American Diabetes Association.

Diabetics have a higher chance of problems with kidneys, heart, nerves, eyes and feet. Eye disease and kidney disease occurs twice as often in Latinos.

Latinas with diabetes are three to four times more likely to have heart disease or stroke than non-diabetic women.

These complications can be prevented through cooperative efforts by physician and patient. Diabetes should be monitored on a regular basis and health care is vital in the progression of the disease.

Regular checkups and education are one of the keys to maintaining control over blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

The American Diabetes Association suggests that there is a significant decrease in complications when glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol are controlled.

Specifically, blood pressure control can reduce heart disease and stroke by almost half and eye, kidney and nerve disease by a third. Cholesterol control can reduce heart-related complications by 20% to 50%.

Being overweight or obese is a leading risk factor for type 2 diabetes. This is why one of the first treatments is meal planning in addition to weight loss and exercise. A health care provider or dietician can provide information and advice about healthy eating choices.

If changes in diet don't bring the glucose levels down near the normal range the next step is medication. This medication comes in the form of insulin shots or pills.

Diabetes management services are provided by Project Dulce at several community clinics in San Diego. Project Dulce, Community Diabetes Care Program, offers care and education to the low-income and uninsured. These services include individual visits with a nurse educator and nutritionist and access to medications and supplies. The Project Dulce staff speaks several languages and can be reached by phone at 1-800-791-8154.

The American Diabetes Association can provide information and resources through the website: www.diabetes.org or toll-free at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

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