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DIABETES TIPS

As a nation we are inundated by health concerns, and one idea I try to instill in my patients is to be vigilant about health and to embrace prevention. Early detection can be a lifesaver, so I impart as much practical knowledge as I can to help people maintain their healthful lives. Screenings for heart disease, breast and prostate cancer, and diabetes are among those I strongly recommend. Today, I want to talk about type 2 diabetes in particular.

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic disease that has reached epidemic levels in the USA, especially in vulnerable populations. Risk factors for diabetes include family history, obesity, poor diet, being sedentary, and smoking. Though in most cases type 2 diabetes is preventable, once you are diagnosed as a diabetic or a pre-diabetic, the true vigilance is even more crucial.

People diagnosed with diabetes have about a 70% chance of also having cardiovascular disease. This is an extraordinary risk factor, and I would suggest that every person with diabetes have a thorough cardiovascular workup as well. Not only do heart attacks frequently co-occur with diabetes, but also other arterial blockages which can cause strokes or peripheral vascular disease (PVD - blockages in the arms, legs, kidneys, etc.).

Every diabetic patient must pay special attention to their feet. Neuropathy is common; "cold feet," discoloration in the skin, and loss of feeling in the extremities are all causes for concern. If monitored regularly, a doctor has options and can help with foot care. In worst case scenarios, neglect can rapidly lead to amputation of toes, and sometimes entire feet.

Another danger diabetics face is the potentiality of blindness. We should all see our eye doctor annually, but for diabetics having regular eye exams is imperative. Each organ system can be affected, and the eyes can deteriorate to blindness more quickly in untreated diabetics.

Often a person with this disease are reluctant to keep up with testing, and can find themselves quickly in medical emergencies. As technology progresses, finger pricks and blood level testing is becoming increasingly affordable and less invasive.

The patients I see who manage their diabetes best are the ones who face it head-on. They find ways to alter their diet by finding healthy recipes or incorporating new foods into their daily meals. They exercise more and quit smoking; they get acquainted with their bodies and learn to moderate their lifestyles. They learn to see these measures as guidelines not limitations, and make real strides in living long, healthy, engaged lives.

If you suspect that you or a loved one might be at risk for diabetes, talk to your physician. Diagnosis usually requires a simple blood test which can serve as a baseline moving forward with treatment. If you have

diabetes, speak to your physician about disease management, and make sure to stay abreast of complications, medications, and diet.

Your life is one to be ***lived*** - as vivaciously, meaningfully, and radiantly as possible! Remember to take care of yourself, your loved ones, and to take your health to heart.

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