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**Diabetes Life Lines**

**Back to Basics: Prevent Dental Problems**

If your diabetes is poorly controlled, you are more likely to get cavities and gum problems called gingivitis and periodontitis. When blood glucose is high, bacteria grow rapidly in your mouth. These bacteria then mix with the starch and sugar from your food and form a film on your teeth. This film called plaque can destroy your tooth enamel leading to cavities and gums infection. You may have problems chewing and can even lose teeth if untreated. Gum disease also makes it even harder to control your blood glucose.

You may also have a dry mouth. Dry mouth happens when you do not have enough saliva—the fluid that keeps your mouth wet. Diabetes may also cause the glucose level in your saliva to increase. Together, these problems may lead to thrush, which causes painful white patches in your mouth.

To prevent these problems, follow these steps:

- Control your blood glucose.
- Brush at least twice a day and floss every day. Use a soft tooth brush that does not irritate your gums. Brushing after every meal is even better.
- Visit your dentist at least twice a year to have a check-up and to get your teeth cleaned. Be sure to tell your dentist that you have diabetes.
- Tell your dentist if your dentures (false teeth) do not fit right, or if your gums are sore.
- Quit smoking. Smoking makes gum disease worse. Your doctor can help you to quit.

Report any gum redness, bleeding or swelling to your dentist. Also report any loose teeth, mouth pain or dryness. Schedule an appointment to see your dentist right away if these occur.

Remember, good blood glucose control can help prevent expensive and painful mouth problems.
How to Stay Safe While Driving

High or a low blood sugar can cause you to feel tired and confused and lead to blurred vision, unconsciousness, or seizure. If any of these things happen while you are driving, you can put yourself and others in danger. Therefore, you must manage your diabetes to ensure your safety.

Each state has its own rules about getting a driver’s license if you have diabetes. For instance, some states ask whether you have diabetes and if you have had a hypoglycemic (low blood sugar) reaction that caused you to lose consciousness. Other states may only ask a broad question about whether you have any conditions that may alter your perception or cause you to lose consciousness while driving.

Having diabetes alone cannot prevent you from getting a driver’s license. However, your license can be suspended or restricted if you frequently have hypoglycemic reactions behind the wheel. Your license may even be suspended for 6 months and only be reinstated when you prove you have made changes to correct this issue.

Always carry your blood glucose meter and carb-containing snacks with you all the time if you are on medicines that are likely to cause low blood glucose. Before driving, check your blood sugar. If your blood sugar is below your target range, drink or snack on something containing 15 grams of carbohydrate. Then about 15 minutes later, recheck your blood sugar to be sure you are in a safe range. Treat again with 15 more grams of carbohydrate if the blood sugar is still low. Once your blood sugar level is within target, it is safe to drive.

If you have symptoms of hypoglycemia while driving, pull over as soon as possible and check and treat your blood sugar. Do not start driving again until you are feeling back to normal and your blood sugar returns to the target range.

Position Statement on Type 1 Diabetes

For the first time the American Diabetes Association has published a position paper about type 1 diabetes through the life span. This important paper covers all aspects of diabetes care from infants to older adults. Some highlights from this paper are:

- An A1C of less than 7.5% is recommended for children and teens under age 19 if it does not cause too many low blood glucose reactions. For adults the goal is less than 7%, and for some who can handle it, less than 6.5%. Of course, a doctor must individualize these goals for each person.
Senior adults and those with hypoglycemia unawareness may need less strict targets.

- Screening for celiac disease and thyroid disease should be done since these diseases are more common in people with Type 1 diabetes.
- Education about changing from pediatric care to adult care should begin in early adolescence to make sure it occurs smoothly.
- Diabetes management becomes more complex over time so diabetes education throughout a person’s life is needed.
- At each check-up, the medical team should address psychological issues such as depression, eating disorders, stress, fear of low blood glucose reactions and skipping insulin.
- Children and adolescents need 60 minutes of physical activity every day and adults need 150 minutes per week. This is the same for those without diabetes. The key is to learn to adjust insulin and/or increase food intake to prevent low blood glucose actions.

- Frequent blood glucose monitoring improves blood glucose control. Up to 10 checks per day may be needed.
- Continuous blood glucose monitoring, if used consistently, can reduce A1C levels by about 0.26%.
- Medicines like metformin, now only approved for those with Type 2 diabetes, may help those with Type 1, but more studies are needed.
- Once a girl goes through puberty, she should get pre-pregnancy counseling since excellent blood glucose control is needed before any pregnancy.

To read the entire position paper, go to http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/37/7/2034
Recipe Corner

Greek Isles Pizza

Serve this recipe with a crisp tossed salad.

1 8-inch pre-made pizza crust (ideally whole wheat)
1 teaspoon olive oil
1 cup raw spinach, cut into strips
1 roma tomato, sliced
2 ounces chopped or shredded cooked chicken
¼ cup sliced red onion
¼ cup crumbled reduced fat feta cheese
2 tablespoons fresh basil or ½ teaspoon dried basil

1. Preheat oven according to pizza crust directions. Place pizza crust on non-stick cookie sheet. Brush pizza crust with oil.
2. Top with remaining ingredients.
3. Bake according to pizza crust directions.
4. Serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings

Nutrition Analysis:

| Calories: 307 | Carbohydrate: 39 grams | Protein: 18 grams |
| Fat: 9 grams | Saturated Fat: 3 grams | Cholesterol: 34 milligrams |
| Sodium: 580 milligrams | Fiber: 2 grams |

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Dear Friend,

*Diabetes Life Lines* is a bi-monthly publication sent to you by your local county Extension agent.

It is written by an Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist and other health professionals from the University of Georgia. This newsletter brings you the latest information on diabetes self-management, healthy recipes and news about important diabetes-related events.

If you would like more information, please contact your local county Extension Office.

Yours truly,

County Extension Agent

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