Continuing Care for Your Diabetes

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Diabetes is a disease affecting the amount of sugar in the blood. Having too much sugar can cause many problems with many different parts of the body, including the blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, heart, and feet. It is very important to see a doctor regularly to check your blood sugar and to make sure that it is not causing any serious problems for your body. There are many tests that are used to check how your body is affected by blood sugar which need to be performed on a regular basis. Here is an explanation of tests that are frequently used to check how your body is responding to your sugar:

Blood Pressure: Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the walls of the blood vessels. Two levels of blood pressure are measured: the highest, or systolic, occurs when the heart pumps blood into the blood vessels, and the lowest, or diastolic, occurs when the heart rests. **Our goal is for your blood pressure to be less than 135/85.** If your blood pressure is higher than 135/85, see the doctor to determine how best to lower your blood pressure. High blood pressure can damage the heart, brain, blood vessels, and/or kidneys.

Hemoglobin A1C: Hemoglobin A1C sums up how much sugar (glucose) has been in the blood during the past 3-4 months. The number helps to determine the balance between diet, exercise, and medications to control diabetes. This test is recommended usually every 3-6 months. **Our goal is to have a Hemoglobin A1C less than 7.** If 7 or more, see the doctor to see what can be done to better control your diabetes.

Microalbumin in urine: Measurement of microalbumin helps to determine if our kidneys are healthy, and even a small amount of albumin in the urine can be a sign of kidney disease. This test is usually recommended once each **year. Our goal is to have no albumin (negative) in the urine.** If albumin is greater than 20, see the doctor to determine if medication can help to protect your kidneys.

Cholesterol: Cholesterol is a substance in food and is also produced by the body. Our body needs some cholesterol but too much can make fat stick to the walls of the arteries and cause a disease that decreases or stops circulation. **Our goal is to have cholesterol less than 200**, see the doctor for further evaluation. Triglycerides (TG), LDL, and HDL also measure the levels of cholesterol in your blood. TG should be below 200. LDL is the "bad" cholesterol and should be below 100. HDL is the "good" cholesterol and should be above 35 for men and above 45 for women.

Foot screening: Foot inspection and screening can identify signs and symptoms related to circulation problems, nerve damage, or infections which can cause serious foot problems. Controlling your glucose and not smoking can help protect your feet**. If your feet tingle, burn, or hurt, or if you are not able to feel touch, heat, or cold, tell your doctor or nurse**. Always wear shoes and socks and watch for dry, cracked feet or corns, blisters, sores, scratches, or infections. Ask your doctor or nurse to look at your feet each visit, and tell them about any changes in your feet, no matter how small.

Eye screening: Diabetic eye disease is a serious problem that can lead to loss of sight. Have a dilated eye exam each year and follow recommendations. Controlling your glucose and keeping your blood pressure under control can help to prevent diabetic eye disease. **If your vision is blurred, or if you're seeing rings around lights, dark spots, or flashing lights, be sure to tell your doctor or nurse**. Treating eye problems early can help save sight. A dilated eye exam is usually recommended once each year.