

Diabetes in adolescents

Diabetes is a rapidly growing, serious health problem among youngster today. Above thirteen thousand adolescents are diagnosed for type 1 diabetes, every year in America. There has also been an increase in the number of teenagers with type 2 diabetes, which was more common among adults above forty and who were overweight. Clinics are reporting that nearly half of the new childhood diabetes cases are of type 2. Adolescents, who are obese and had type 2 diabetes in the family history, are at a greater risk of developing diabetes.

Diabetes is a disease where the human body is incapable of producing or utilizing insulin. Insulin is a hormone produced by the body in order to get energy by converting starches, sugar and other items. Since the insulin isn't used properly in diabetic people, the blood sugar level increases. This glucose buildup is found in blood and is then passed onto the urine and comes out of the body and the major source of body energy is lost.

Diabetes is a serious chronic disease and should be handled at proper time; otherwise it can create serious problems. It can pose a risk and can damage parts of the human body such as eyes, teeth, gums, blood vessels, nerves, and kidneys. This is the reason why diabetes is responsible in most of the cases of adult blindness, kidney failure and lower limb amputations. And if left untreated, it can cause stroke, heart disease and eventually, death. These problems are not only faced by adults, but also adolescents who get diabetes in their childhood. The important factor in treatment of diabetes is to keep the blood sugar level normal at all times.

There are basically two types of diabetes that will affect an adolescent. It is type 1 diabetes and type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes affects the immune system's function as the systems attacks the pancreas' insulin producing cells, also known as the beta cells. Because of this, the pancreas loses the ability to manufacture insulin. This is the reason why people with type 1 diabetes take insulin everyday. The symptoms are weight loss, increase in urination & thirst, blurred vision, tiredness and constant hunger. And if the adolescent isn't treated at the right time, he/she can slip in to diabetic coma which can endanger his/her life. In type2 diabetes, the body is incapable of properly using the insulin produced by the body and requires insulin from an external source, too. The symptoms of type 2 diabetes are similar to type 1 diabetes. The teenager feels sick, tired, nauseated, and thirsty. The wounds will recover very slowly; he/she will get infections frequently, will develop blurred vision and will experience weight loss.

Parents play a vital role in determining the problem. They should constantly

observe their child for eating disorders or signs of depression. Although cigarette, drugs and alcohol should be avoided by all adolescents and children, it is even more important that youngster with diabetes should stay away from these things as they can worsen the situation. A person with diabetes, who switches to smoking, is at risk of developing cardiovascular diseases and circulatory problems. Consumption of alcohol can cause hypoglycemia or low blood sugar. It is the duty of the parents to make their child aware of the possible risk they would face if they start to smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs.

Children and adolescents, who have diabetes, face many challenges while trying to lead a normal life. They have to think twice before doing simple things as going to a party, playing sports and even when staying over with friends. This is because they require to intake oral medication or insulin. Their blood sugar level must be checked many times through out the day. Also, at gatherings, they have to avoid many food items. Because of this they will feel different from the crowd and can feel left out. Not only does diabetes pose behavioral challenges, but also emotional challenges.

Along with doctor consultation, a psychologist must also be consulted who can deal with the emotional challenges of the adolescent. The family should also play an active role in making the youngster feel better. The family should work in collaboration with physician, dietitian and diabetes educators. Teachers, counselors, school nurses, day care providers, and other community members can provide extended support and guidance. They can provide help with transportation, mental health counseling, health education, social services and financial services.

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