Preventive Care Guidelines for Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic illness. It requires continual medical care and education to prevent acute complications and to reduce the risk of long-term complications. To achieve these goals, the American Diabetes Association recommends these guidelines for the preventive care of diabetes.

Initial Visit

On first diagnosis of diabetes or on your first visit to a new health care provider, a thorough physical exam and health history should be done. A plan to achieve good glucose control should be made with your help, taking into consideration your lifestyle, presence of diabetes complications or other medical problems.

Care Visits

The number of visits can vary based on your health needs. Generally, patients not treated with insulin should be seen at least twice a year and those on insulin should be seen four times a year.

Visits should include a review of your:

- Nutrition
- Exercise plan
- Glucose control
- Cholesterol levels
- Episodes of hypoglycemia (low blood glucose)
- Blood pressure and weight
- Diabetes complications
- Foot care
- Psychological adjustment
**Laboratory Tests**

**Glycosylated hemoglobin or HgbA1c:** This is an average of all your blood glucose levels over a three-month period. This test should be done twice a year for patients who are not using insulin and four times a year for those who are using insulin or any diabetes patient who has poor glucose control.

**Cholesterol and triglycerides:** This is a measurement of blood fats and should be tested once a year in adults and every two years in children.

**Urinalysis:** This test gives a general view of kidney function and should be done once a year. If it shows certain abnormalities, a urine culture will be done to look for infections. A urine culture may also be needed if symptoms of a urinary tract infection are present.

**24 hour urine collection:** This test measures kidney function and should be done once a year after having diabetes for five years.

**Thyroid function tests:** These tests are done from time to time, or when symptoms appear. Tell your doctor if you have new feelings of being unusually cold, hot or nervous all the time.

**Complications of Diabetes**

**Retinopathy (diabetic eye disease):** A complete eye exam should be done by an eye doctor who has experience working with diabetes. Patients over 30 years of age and patients 12 to 30 years of age who have had diabetes more than five years should have an eye exam once a year.

**Neuropathy (nerve damage):** Neuropathy can cause problems with the heart, gastrointestinal tract, and pain and loss of sensation in the hands or feet. Your health care provider may suggest a visit to a specialist.

**Foot care:** Patients may choose to see a podiatrist (foot specialist) for regular foot care such as nail trimming. Anyone with neuropathy or other foot problems should have their feet checked by their health care provider at each visit.

**Nephropathy (abnormal kidney function):** A patient who develops this problem needs counseling about risk factors such as hypertension and smoking and may need to be seen by a renal (kidney) specialist.