

MANAGING DIABETES

No one is ever excited about being told they have diabetes. The diagnosis comes with a long list of do's and don'ts. This disease asks you to restructure and rethink your daily choices in how you eat, drink and take care of your body. We have listed 5 important areas for you to focus on to help manage your blood sugar.

Remember that diabetes is in your control and you are the most essential member of your healthcare team!

- 1) Nutrition is your number one priority. Everything you eat or drink affects your blood sugar. A good rule of thumb is to eat foods that are low glycemic, take a little longer to prepare, require more chewing and have color. This will help you avoid the quick sugar bombs of pre-packaged, high-glycemic fast food choices. Foods that are grab-and-go will not keep your sugar steady and will set you up for a glucose rollercoaster ride.

Examples of slow-burn food (low glycemic): Dark green vegetables, raw carrots, lentils, beans, fruit, nuts and nut butter, eggs, plain yogurt and full-fat milk.

Examples of fast-burning food (high glycemic): sodas, white rice, plain bread, potatoes, sugary food and desserts, corn, french fries, chips and cereals.

- 2) Exercise has a positive impact on our bodies. Creating a regular movement routine on a daily basis will have a positive effect on your blood sugar. Walking is the most accessible exercise we have. Set a goal that once a day you leave the house and go for a 10-minute walk. Take some deep breaths while walking, hum a song you enjoy, and just enjoy the fresh air.

- 3) Sleep. Create a bedtime routine that enables you to rest for 7 hours. Turn the television off at 9:00 pm and be ready to close your eyes by 10:00 pm at the latest. If your household members have other plans you can still be in charge of when you go to sleep. Maybe your good habits will rub off on them! Set yourself up for a good night's rest by avoiding sugary snacks, caffeine and alcohol. Your blood sugar will thank you.

- 4) Smoking is terrible for our health. The smoke you inhale competes for oxygen inside your body. Diabetics who smoke become more resistant to insulin making it difficult to manage their blood sugar.

Identify why you smoke, what it brings you and what it would feel like not to have a house full of smoke, lungs that don't cough, less illness, better blood pressure and saving money from not buying cigarettes.

- 5) Alcohol can cause your blood sugar to become low (hypoglycemic). Your liver is responsible for breaking down the alcohol as well as maintaining your blood sugar. It cannot do both at the same time. Alcohol can interfere with your medications. It can have lasting effects on your blood sugar for up to 12 hours. If you do drink, limit it to one glass and have a healthy snack. (Half a sandwich, nuts, cheese and crackers) Signs of severe hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) can appear similar to those of being drunk. Make sure to always wear your medic-alert bracelet so people know you are a diabetic.

Alcohol, smoking, poor nutrition, lack of exercise and poor sleep can lead to serious health conditions and life-threatening diseases. When you add diabetes to those poor habits it is like throwing a gallon of gasoline on a hot fire. You are causing enormous instability within the body and it is unable to regulate. You can live a full life with diabetes if you are willing to create healthy rituals. Keep a health notebook to write down questions, record blood sugar readings, track medication schedules and remember to keep your scheduled appointments. The staff of Lander Free Medical Clinic is here to help.

