



## Beat diabetes – manage it

By Robert St. Clair, MD, North Basin Medical Clinics



I balance my checkbook. My finances are important to me, so I keep track of where I spend my money and on what. Although I take my finances very seriously, as I know you do too, there is something money can't buy that takes top priority in my life – my health.

Health, even more so than money, needs to be managed – especially by people with diabetes.

Diabetes is more than just a problem with blood sugar or the body's inability to make or use insulin properly. It is a full-on assault on your body. No system is safe from this predator and the complications it brings. And make no mistake – diabetes is a predator willing to take your eyesight (diabetic retinopathy), your mental capacity (stroke), your kidneys (kidney disease) or your mobility (loss of limbs). It will take your very life (heart disease or stroke), but only if you let it.

As a healthcare provider, I've seen many people who don't take diabetes seriously enough. To beat this disease you must manage it. How? With our new C-DEMS Diabetes Management program and these simple steps...

### 1. Know your enemy.

Many diabetics underestimate diabetes and its effects. They take their medication, and as long as they're feeling good, diabetes is "no problem." This attitude is the problem. You're not fighting. You're living with the enemy and giving it room to move and grow. Take back the upper hand. Research diabetes and understand it. When you understand your enemy, you can come up with strategies to defeat it.

### 2. Plan your defensive strategy.

Defense is easy. It's following your healthcare provider's directions. Take your medications exactly as prescribed. I can't stress how important it is to keep to a strict regimen on insulin or other medications that control your diabetes. Even medications for related problems like high blood pressure should be taken regularly. Don't skip. Don't take it "when it's convenient." Take it when you're supposed to.

Follow your dietary plan. I know this can get very difficult, especially when it comes to shopping and eating out. Learning about exchanges, diabetic friendly foods and portion sizes is a huge step toward victory. If you find the dietary side of diabetes hard to grasp, talk to your healthcare provider. We can set you up with our staff dietitian, a diabetic educator or special classes to help you learn what to eat and how to shop.

Exercise. The possibilities range from swimming and cycling, to lifting weights and gardening. However, my favorite is walking. Walking is not only easy and inexpensive, but very effective in bringing down blood sugar levels, lowering high blood pressure and burning calories. If you walk one mile today, try to walk a little further tomorrow. Keep building as every step will bring you closer to better health.

And the last (but not least) important step in defense is to stop smoking. Smoking causes a host of complications. If you need help with this, contact your doctor or the Lincoln County Public Health Department at (509) 725-1001 for ideas on how to kick the habit.

### 3. Design your offense.

This is where management comes in. With the help of your provider, make a schedule of appointments and tests you need throughout the year and track your results. This includes...

- Glucose monitoring
- A1-C testing every three months to check long-term glucose levels
- Vision exam, annually
- Full lipid profile including cholesterol, HDL, LDL, triglycerides and kidney function
- Diabetic foot & extremity exam
- Blood pressure check on a schedule directed by your provider
- Comprehensive exam

To make this easier for our patients, North Basin Medical Clinics has implemented a comprehensive diabetes management program. It uses a computer program to track tests and appointments, and chart their outcome. Not only does your doctor have all your diabetes-related information on one piece of paper, but the patient has that same information in an easy to understand format. Knowing your numbers and keeping track of progress is half the battle. We can not only be proactive against diabetes, we can win by living a complication-free life.

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