

DIABETES AND FAMILY: COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 16 Nov 2018 · B2-2 · By Charles E. Buban

Over 425 million individuals around the world are currently living with diabetes. Here in the Philippines, they could be as many as 7.4 million Filipinos. Most of these cases—90 to 95 percent—are type 2 diabetes, which is largely preventable through regular exercise and physical activity, a healthy and balanced diet, and the promotion of healthy living environments.

As the world celebrated World Diabetes Day last Wednesday, the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) urges families to play a key role in addressing the modifiable risk factors for type 2 diabetes, a reason why it chose: “The Family and Diabetes” as its theme this year and in 2019.

The IDF says families have a key role to play in addressing the modifiable risk factors for type 2 diabetes and must be provided with the education, resources and environments to live a healthy lifestyle.

There are three main focus areas: Discover diabetes Prevent diabetes Manage diabetes 1 in 2 Considering that one in two individuals currently living with diabetes is undiagnosed, early diagnosis and treatment are key to preventing the complications of this progressive disease. Since all family members are potentially affected by diabetes, awareness of the signs, symptoms and risk factors are vital to help detect it early.

While it's important to keep in mind that many people with type 2 diabetes have no noticeable symptoms, one should watch out for these following symptoms that may point to having an undiagnosed diabetes:

1. Frequent urination. When blood sugar levels are high, the kidneys try to remove the excess sugar by filtering it out of the blood. This can lead to a person needing to urinate more frequently, particularly at night.
2. Increased thirst. The frequent urination that is necessary to remove excess sugar from the blood can result in the body losing water that can lead to dehydration. This leads that person to feel more thirsty than usual.
3. Always feeling hungry. People with diabetes often do not get enough energy from the food they eat because their cells are not getting glucose that remain circulating in the bloodstream. As a result, people with type 2 diabetes often feel constantly hungry, regardless of how recently they have eaten.
4. Feeling very tired. Having type 2 diabetes causes one to feel very tired or fatigued. This is because of insufficient sugar moving from the bloodstream and into the body's cells.
5. Blurry vision. An excess of sugar in the blood can damage the tiny blood vessels in the eyes and may cause blurry vision. This blurry vision can occur in one or both of the eyes

and may come and go. If a person with diabetes goes without treatment, the damage to these blood vessels can become more severe, and permanent vision loss may eventually occur. 6. Slow healing of cuts and

wounds. High levels of sugar in the blood can damage the body's nerves and blood vessels, which can impair blood circulation. As a result, even small cuts and wounds may take weeks or months to heal. Slow wound healing also increases the risk of infection.

Sometimes, these symptoms may not manifest in women and may experience the following. Thus, they should be wary of the fact they may already have diabetes and should see both an obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-Gyn), as well as an endocrinologist: itching and soreness in the vaginal area, vaginal discharge painful sex urinary infection that causes pain while urinating, burning sensation, bloody or cloudy urine tingling and loss of feeling in the hands, feet and legs having signs of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) that may include symptoms like irregular periods, weight gain, acne, depression and infertility

Involving the whole family

Preventing type 2 diabetes should involve the whole family as each member's support in diabetes care has been shown to have a substantial effect in improving health outcomes for people with diabetes, according to IDF. The organization adds that it is also important that ongoing diabetes self-management education and support be accessible to all people with diabetes and their families to reduce the emotional impact of the disease that can result in a negative quality of life.

Involve the whole family in streamlining the kitchen. This means the foods and drinks that are the worst for people with diabetes should no longer be part of the refrigerators and cabinets. Work as a team to replace these with healthier options.

Be active together. Physical activity helps manage diabetes. Find activities that can be enjoyed by each family member—it is more fun when the whole family is walking, hiking, biking, or dancing along with the diabetic person.

Give the household the facts about hypoglycemia, like if one is taking insulin, that person runs the risk of experiencing low blood sugar. Family members must need to know the signs and symptoms of having low blood sugar (shakiness, dizziness, sweating, irritability or moodiness, feeling hungry, anxiety or nervousness, and headache), as well as how to respond to them (usually by offering the affected person fruit juice or hard candy). Let them know how vital their quick response will be to the diabetic person in an emergency.

Explain why eating schedule may be different for one with diabetes. Let family members know they can help, by understanding why diabetes management involve teaching about the right portion sizes for healthy meals for everyone. Remember: It is really hard for people to change their eating habits at home when everyone else is still eating in excess.

The World Diabetes Day is celebrated annually every 14th of November. This special day was created in 1991 by the IDF and the World Health Organization in response to growing concerns about the escalating health threat posed by diabetes.