

# Managing your diabetes

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DIABETES MELLITUS is a chronic condition where there is not enough of the hormone insulin produced or the insulin produced is not working well in the body. The pancreas produces insulin. Insulin is used to transport glucose into the cells so that it can be used in the body for energy. In 2017, the Ministry of Health and Wellness highlighted that diabetes mellitus affects over 200,000 Jamaicans and counting. There are three types of diabetes – Type 1, Type 2, and gestational diabetes. Pre-diabetes is where your blood glucose readings are elevated too close to developing diabetes mellitus. Type 1 diabetes mellitus, which occurs in children, is where not enough insulin is produced. Type 2 diabetes mellitus is where the insulin produced is not working well. And lastly, gestational diabetes mellitus is where the blood glucose becomes very high during pregnancy. Type 2 diabetes mellitus is more common among Jamaicans; and more women than men have diabetes mellitus.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS THAT CAN LEAD TO DIABETES MELLITUS?

- Age
- Obesity/overweight
- Family history or genetics
- Lack of physical activity
- Unhealthy eating
- Smoking
- Drinking excessively

For those living with diabetes mellitus, there are some important and gradual lifestyle changes to consider that may help with your wellbeing and general wellness. These include healthy eating, physical activity/exercise and stress management.

Healthy diet

Eating healthy foods and maintaining a balanced diet is a vital part of life and what to eat will always be the everyday question on your mind. Here are some tips to consider for meal planning and plating your meal.

1/2 of your plate is vegetable

1/4 of the plate carbohydrate

1/4 of the plate protein meats/ fish/ beans

### Physical activity

The Ministry of Health and Wellness recommends 30 minutes per day for four to five days a week. Physical activity helps promote good circulation in the body. Exercise activities may include swimming, cycling, and football, running, and walking.

### Taking your medication

Take your medication as prescribed and follow the instructions according to the label when explained by your pharmacist.

### Self-glucose monitoring

Use your blood glucose device to check your blood sugar daily.

### Coping skills

This condition is going to take up a lot of your time, money and attention so this can be overwhelming. Talk to a counsellor or a trusted friend, when feeling overwhelmed or stressed. Manage your time with work, finances, family and friends, but make time for yourself. Hence, it is important to seek help when you need it. Meditation and prayer are important to maintain spiritual wellness.

### WELLNESS TIPS

- Buy fruits and vegetables in season because the cost will be lower and you will be able to buy more of the produce.
- Pack lunch and snacks when possible.
- Bring your own vegetables to have with your lunch because meals that you have to purchase come with little or no vegetables. Pasta is more starch and is not a replacement for your vegetables.
- Water! The body is made up of 60 per cent water and drinking water prevents dehydration. Bring a bottle a day.
- For your fruits, blend them, bottle them or freeze for easy use and longer shelf life. You can make a smoothie in the mornings or at nights instead of a heavy meal before bed. Blended fruits don't always require sugar.
- Use more of your natural seasonings. You can blend or cut them up and place in a zip lock bag and freeze and that helps with longer use. Try to use only one or two powdered seasoning. Check the label for the sodium content.
- Physical activity can be done at any time of the day. To keep motivated, you can join a group or partner with someone in your exercise routine.
- Sleep is essential for the body and lack of sleep increases tiredness and stress levels. This can result in elevated blood glucose levels.

Diabetes mellitus is not an easy condition, but with the proper tools and knowledge you will be able to manage the condition and live a long, happy and healthy life. Get screened today and know your numbers.