This is how diabetes can impact your body from head to toe

Manila Standard · 3 Jul 2025 · C4

MEDICAL experts are raising alarms about diabetes, often called a “silent killer,” due to its ability to cause severe damage throughout the body before symptoms become apparent. Chronic high blood sugar, resulting from the body’s inability to produce or properly use insulin, can lead to life-threatening complications affecting the heart, eyes, kidneys, and nerves.



Doctors at Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed) stress that diabetes impacts nearly every major organ system, making early detection and proactive management essential to prevent irreversible harm.

Dr. Jimmy B. Aragon of MakatiMed’s Diabetes Care Center explains that prolonged exposure to high blood sugar damages blood vessels, leading to serious health conditions.

Cardiovascular disease is a major risk, as damaged vessels become stiff and develop plaque, increasing the likelihood of heart attacks and strokes.

Diabetes also threatens vision by damaging blood vessels in the eyes, potentially causing diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, and glaucoma. Kidney function can deteriorate as high blood sugar impairs filtration, sometimes necessitating dialysis or a transplant. Additionally, nerve damage, or neuropathy, often manifests in the feet, leading to numbness, slow-healing wounds, and infections.

Many patients remain unaware of their condition until complications arise. Warning signs include excessive thirst, frequent urination, fatigue, and dry skin.

Dr. Aragon emphasizes the importance of two key tests for diagnosis: the Fasting Blood Sugar test, where levels of 126 mg/dL (7 mmol/L) or higher indicate diabetes, and the HbA1c test, which measures average blood sugar over two to three months.

While medications help regulate blood sugar, lifestyle modifications play a critical role. Dr. Aragon recommends a diet rich in low-glycemic whole grains and fiber while avoiding sugary beverages. Regular physical activity, such as a 30-minute walk after meals, can improve insulin sensitivity and overall health.

Due to the heightened risk of foot complications, proper foot care—including regular cleaning, moisturizing, and protective footwear—is crucial. Patients are also advised to monitor their blood pressure, cholesterol, and kidney function regularly.

“Diabetes doesn’t have to dictate a person’s life,” says Dr. Aragon. “With proper management, patients can maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.”