

Health and Wellness

Provided by Bethany Care Ministry Outreach Program



How are Diabetes and Alzheimer's Related?

November is National Diabetes Month and Alzheimer's Awareness Month. These two major diseases impact our population and our health care system. As our government struggles with the issues of providing health care for all Americans, let's see what we can do, as individuals, to help ourselves as well as those we care about to achieve optimal good health.

Type II Diabetes has been identified as a major health problem in the U.S. for young and old alike. Now researchers are telling us that the same problems that have created the increase in the incidence of diabetes can be related to Alzheimer's disease. These health problems can also lead to heart disease. That is because eating a diet that is high in saturated fat, not exercising regularly, smoking, and drinking alcohol to excess are all risk factors for diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and heart disease. If we don't learn to control these risk factors, our population will continue with a high percentage of obese people who will develop heart trouble, diabetes and possibly dementia.

When a person has high cholesterol, the arteries may begin to clog with plaque. For someone who is also diabetic, this plaque becomes hardened. This same plaque clogs all the major arteries, to all the major organs of the body, including the brain, which can result in a multitude of health problems. Eating a diet that is low in saturated fat, high in fiber which helps raise good cholesterol, and includes plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and water will go a long way towards controlling the risk for developing these diseases or lessening the severity for many people who already have them.

Smoking is another risk factor that impacts every system in the body because it causes constriction of the blood vessels leading to poor circulation which then affects all the major organs in the body, including the brain. Most people think of lung disease as a result of smoking, but it can contribute to complications from diabetes, heart disease and Alzheimer's. Visit the American Lung Association for tips on how to quit smoking, www.lungusa.org.

Excess alcohol intake impacts chemical balances in the brain, leading to Alzheimer's disease as well as causing changes in the blood sugar which can lead to diabetes. If you or someone you care for has problems with alcohol abuse, contact Waupaca County for help at 258-6304.

Regular exercise, at least 30 minutes a day 3-5 days a week can be beneficial to overall well-being, including lowering blood sugar levels, strengthening heart muscles, and increasing oxygenation to the brain. Did you ever notice that your "head seems clearer" after a brisk walk? That is because you increased the level of oxygen to your brain.

So this November, remember to take care of yourself and those you love by eating a healthy diet, getting some regular exercise, stopping smoking if you are a smoker, and using alcohol in moderation or not at all. To learn more visit the Alzheimer's Association website at www.alz.org or the American Diabetes Association website www.diabetes.org.

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