

Let's Take a Look at Diabetes



The fastest-growing segment of the American population consists of individuals aged 60 and older. In 1994, one out

of every eight individuals in our country was over 65 years old. By the year 2020 it is estimated that one out of every six people will be over 65.

Approximately 20% of people over 65 year have diabetes, and just about half of those people don't even know that they have it! Another 20% of people over the age of 65 have impaired glucose tolerance. That adds up to a full 40% of senior citizens with some degree of glucose intolerance!

Many individuals have had diabetes for several years before finding out about it. That's why it's so important to have a thorough annual health exam. This should include, but is not limited to:



- Complete physical exam
- Hemoglobin A1c
- A dilated eye exam by an ophthalmologist
- A urine microalbumin to assess kidney health
- A complete foot exam to assess for nerve damage and circulatory problems
- Assessment for the presence or risk of heart disease

Diabetes in the elderly is often under-treated. Diabetes should not be allowed to tarnish the golden years. Uncontrolled diabetes may lead to many problems including:

- Fatigue and lethargy
- Increased frequency of urination
 - ▶ which can cause incontinence
 - ▶ which can interrupt sleep patterns
 - ▶ which can lead to dehydration
 - ▶ which can cause mineral deficiencies because certain minerals are lost in the urine (particularly zinc, chromium, and magnesium)
- Blurred vision
- Impotence
- Poor wound healing
- Decreased ability to fight infection
- Increased platelets aggregation which increases the risk of heart attack and stroke
- Confusion and hallucinations, which if not promptly treated can lead to coma and death.
- Hyperosmolar, hyperglycemic, nonketotic syndrome

Did You Know:

As the body ages, the sense of thirst diminishes. Thirst is not a reliable indicator of hydration and many senior citizens end up dehydrated. Uncontrolled diabetes further increases the risk for dehydration. Adequate fluid intake is crucially important. Seniors should aim for at least 8 cups of fluid per day, and drink more on hot days. (Alcoholic beverages don't count toward fluid goals.)