

FIRST steps in DIABETES MANAGEMENT

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Diabetes is a growing concern in Singapore. One in every nine Singaporean has diabetes. Diabetes is no longer a medical condition that affects the old; young people are getting it, too. Regardless of the person's age, or the type of diabetes that he or she may be found to have, the common question on everyone's mind is still how to manage one's blood sugar level.

1. Getting Over First Reactions

For most people who are first diagnosed with diabetes, their reactions range from denial to despair. It is natural to feel lost for a period of time after receiving the unwelcome news. It will certainly help if the person can talk to a family member or a close friend about the illness. Freeing up the mind and heart is better than bottling up the confused thoughts and frustrated feelings.

2. See A Diabetes Nurse Educator

After coming to terms and getting a grip on the initial "loss" that a newly diagnosed diabetes patient finds him or herself in, he or she will definitely be more confident to seek professional help from Diabetes Nurse Educators (DNE) and dietitians. DNE and dietitians are available in hospitals, polyclinics and at Diabetic Society of Singapore (DSS)

From the DNE, the patient can gain a better understanding of diabetes, learn effective diabetes management methods, discover the importance of self-blood glucose monitoring, find out how to interpret sugar readings, understand the effects and side effects of their medications and how to minimise and manage those side effects. All these knowledge and skills will allay unnecessary fears and cast aside undesirable myths.

Before a diabetes patient attends the next medical appointment, it helps to gather some information beforehand. Information such as pre- and post-meal blood sugar readings will allow the doctor and

DNE to determine the subsequent best course of treatment and management.

3. See A Dietitian

Patients can also prepare a food and nutrition logbook by recording their meal times, the type of food consumed and its portion. If possible, reserve a column in the record book to capture physical exercise routines such as timing, types, frequency and duration of exercise. It is also important to be aware of any symptoms experienced during the exercise. Under the guidance of the DNE, all the gathered information will empower the patient to better manage his or her diabetes.

4. Check Out Resources and Workshops

Knowledge is power. Be sure to obtain diabetes news updates from established sources such as the Health Promotion Board and the Diabetes Singapore magazine. DSS also conducts Diabetes Self-Care Management Workshops (see back page). Its contents are modular in structure and split over a few sessions to cater to the varying needs of participants.

5. Join A Support Group

Joining a support group is another way of overcoming the initial mental and emotional barriers to clear the way towards doable diabetes management. DSS runs such a support group. Members of this group will meet up and enjoy nature walks in the many scenic parks around Singapore. During these walks, members discuss their varied experiences, share personal diabetes handling techniques, and, most of all, offer one another much needed support and encouragement.

Managing diabetes is a long journey. Only when you start taking the right steps in diabetes management, can you put your blood sugar levels under control for the long term.

