

Many people with diabetes develop some form of complication over time. This results in poor health and quality of life, leading to unemployment and a myriad of financial, emotional and psychological problems. Ms Chionh Lay Kheng, diabetes nurse educator, Diabetic Society of Singapore, says it is time to stop making excuses.



Photo Credit : Ronald Hudson

TIME to ACT

My team of nurse educators and I have had to counsel many patients who had already developed complications. Some patients confessed that they had not complied with their medication routine because they were too busy with their work. They did not control their diet and led sedentary lifestyles. Many blamed it on the lack of time to learn to manage their diabetes.

Most patients who are suffering these complications regret not paying more attention to their health. One such patient is Mr Ng Moh Teck (not his real name), aged 56.

Mr Ng developed complications due to poor glucose control. Like many busy Singaporeans, he was always on the go, making business deals and engaged in a lot of social entertainment. One day, to his horror, he realised his toes were pale in colour and rushed to the hospital emergency unit to seek treatment.

He also had blurred vision for a long time, but had not taken any action. He was diagnosed as having severe diabetic proliferative retinopathy (bleeding of the blood vessels in the eye).

Mr Ng paid dearly for ignoring the signs. He had to undergo amputation of two toes and laser surgery for his eyes.

Asked how he felt about having to face the music, Mr Ng said, "Had I paid more attention to my diabetes, I would

not have developed complications like these. Now I feel very weak. I have spent so much of my hard-earned money on treatment and surgeries. I hope people will learn from my lesson and take good care of their health, or they will regret it later."

Complications can lead to unemployment, hospitalisation and even physical handicap. Some patients develop blindness in one or both eyes. Others have had to amputate their toes and lower limbs. Kidney failure, stroke or cardiovascular disease are also some of the known complications.

We have seen countless heart-wrenching cases where people have lost the ability to function, thus causing more distress to their life and family. If you have diabetes and have the will to lead a healthier life, why not start taking charge now? Spare some time to attend diabetes education programmes or counselling sessions, which will truly benefit you and your family in the long run.

Stop making excuses, such as no time to check my blood sugar, no time to exercise, no time to attend diabetes education. If you want to achieve good quality of life, it is never too late. Take control of your diabetes now.

To find out more about empowering yourself to manage your diabetes, please contact your diabetes nurse educator or doctor without delay.