

# Living with Diabetes

## What is Diabetes?

It is a condition where the blood glucose (sugar) level rises after a meal as your body is not capable of handling it efficiently due to insufficient or weakened function of insulin hormone. There are mainly 2 types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is which the body has insufficient insulin and type 2 diabetes is which the function of insulin is weakened (Insulin resistance).

## What is the importance of having good blood sugar control?

Be it type 1 or type 2 achieving good control reduces the risk of complications later in life that can affect our heart, kidneys, nerves, and eyes. Making changes to our lifestyle, diet, and activity level together with compliance to treatment are the key factors to achieve good control.

## How to live healthily?

People with diabetes should adopt a healthy dietary pattern. The diet should be a balanced one.

**(1) Consume regular meals.** It helps you to manage your hunger and avoid overeating. Skipping meals would be sometimes harmful.

**(2) Control your portion sizes.** This helps you reduce and maintain a healthy weight.

A portion is –

- ½ cup of rice
- 3 tablespoons of vegetables
- 1 match box size of fish / poultry
- 1 medium size banana

**(3) Choose whole-grain options.** Carbohydrates are the main energy source of a Sri Lankan meal. Choosing whole-grain substitutes instead of refined products will help to maintain good blood sugar control.

**(4) Aim for at least 5 types of vegetables & fruits a day.** Any vegetables and fruits can be consumed in cooked or raw forms. But be cautious with dried fruits and juices.

**(5) Include good protein sources in your diet.** Fish is a good source of low-fat protein. It contains omega-3 which protects against heart disease. Aim to eat two portions of fish a week.

**(6) Limit the intake of fat.** Focus on reducing saturated fats (eg: butter, processed meat) and trans fats (eg: bakery products). These are linked with an increase in bad cholesterol (LDL) and a decrease in good cholesterol (HDL) in blood, reducing their amount in diet will help to have a healthy cholesterol level as well as will help lose weight by reducing energy intake.

**(7) Include an adequate amount of fiber.** Fiber helps in reducing cholesterol and controlling blood sugar levels.

(8) **Better avoid free sugars.** Keep foods containing sugar to small servings and eat them less often. Avoid adding sugar to fruit juices or cut fruits.

(9) **Hydrate yourself.** Water is the healthiest drink. Ensure intake of 8 – 10 cups (1.5 – 2.0 L) throughout the day. Avoid consuming sugar-sweetened beverages.

(10) **Check the labels on packaged foods.** Choose foods lower in fat, salt, and sugar.

(11) **Sleep adequately.**

(12) **Be physically active.**

### **What is the benefit of physical activity?**

Being physically active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

-It helps to control blood sugar by helping the insulin to work more efficiently

-It reduces the risk of heart attacks and strokes

-It helps to maintain a healthy weight

### **Has weight loss have a role in blood sugar control?**

Especially when you are overweight or obese, losing weight is the important thing you can do to achieve good blood sugar control. Weight loss can make insulin work better. Evidence shows that weight loss has a positive effect on blood cholesterol and blood pressure as well. There is also emerging evidence that weight loss can even bring diabetes into remission in certain population groups. Speak to your nutrition care professional to guide you towards desired weight loss. At the same time, you may need to adjust your medications also when making changes to your diet and physical activity.

### **Synopsis**

Diabetes is a condition where your blood sugar is too high due to a lack of insulin and/or insulin resistance. It is vital to have good blood sugar control to reduce the risk of future complications. If overweight or obese, losing weight is the most important thing you can do. By making changes in lifestyle, diet, and physical activity you can enjoy a happy and healthy life.

