

Diabetes Safety Tips

Diabetes is a disease in which the body is unable to produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is produced in the pancreas. Insulin is a hormone that helps the body convert sugar, starches and other foods into energy.

Insulin helps regulate the utilization and storage of glucose, which is absorbed into our bloodstream after we consume food. The brain depends almost exclusively on glucose to function properly.

Approximately 18.2 million Americans have diabetes. Diabetes is a contributing factor to approximately 200,000 deaths each year. There are two types of diabetes:

- Type 1- Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus (IDDM) also referred to as juvenile diabetes. The body does not produce the hormone insulin. Type 1 diabetics are required to take a daily injection of insulin.
- Type 2- Non Insulin Dependent Diabetes Mellitus (NIDDM) results from insulin resistance a condition in which the body fails to properly use insulin. These people are either taking prescribed medication or are on a diet control program to stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin. This condition is most commonly seen in adults with a history of obesity, lack of physical activity or a family history of diabetes.

Diabetics are at a higher risk for developing atherosclerosis (fat deposits on the inner lining of the arteries). The complications from the narrowing of the arteries can contribute to the following:

- Coronary Artery Disease
- Cerebral Vascular Accident (stroke)
- Kidney Disease
- Blindness
- Skin Ulcers

The two most common diabetic emergencies that pre-hospital care providers encounter are:

- Diabetic Ketoacidosis – (DKA) Diabetic Coma. This occurs when a diabetic does not properly balance their insulin intake with their diet or activity.
- Insulin Shock- (Hypoglycemia – low blood sugar)

The signs and symptoms of someone experiencing Diabetic Ketoacidosis can be one or more of the following:

- Frequent urination (Polyuria)
- Excessive thirst (Polydypsia)
- Excessive hunger (Polyphagia)
- Sweet fruity breath odor
- Abdominal pain (especially in children)
- Rapid deep respirations (Kussmaul's respirations)
- Altered mental status (AMS)



The signs and symptoms of Insulin shock (Hypoglycemic) can be one or more of the following:

- Altered mental status (confusion, irrational behavior, agitated)
- Weakness
- Hunger
- Nausea
- Excessive salivation
- Sweating
- Tachycardia (pulse rate of over 100 beats per minute)
- Pale cool skin
- Dilated pupils

There are several ways one can manage and control their diabetes. You should always consult with your personal physician about the best course of treatment for you.

If you should become ill call 911, follow the instructions from the operator and await trained professional medical assistance.