



TRUSTED TIPS
By HomeWell Care Services™

HomeWellcares
COMMUNITY EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Managing Diabetes While Aging in Place

Living with diabetes is difficult, even when managed effectively. Each day presents new challenges and frustrations, such as budgeting for the costs of care or managing numerous side effects. For older adults with diabetes, these challenges can become increasingly more difficult to overcome and the list of potential complications grows. However, with diligent care and compassionate support, treating diabetes at home is possible.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects how our bodies turn food into energy. The food we eat breaks down into sugar, called glucose. Glucose is then released into our bloodstream and provides energy throughout the day. However, to use this glucose as energy, our bodies need a hormone called insulin. People with diabetes may either not produce enough insulin or use it incorrectly, causing excessive amounts of glucose to stay in the bloodstream.¹ This can lead to a number of complications.

Diabetes in Seniors

While diabetes is a serious condition, no matter your age, it is especially dangerous to adults age 65 and older. About 33% of older adults have diabetes, and studies predict that the number will soon double.² Seniors over the age of 65 are at an increased risk of developing diabetes-related complications like hypoglycemia, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, eye problems and even nerve damage. Those with type 2 diabetes are more likely to develop cancer, depression or Alzheimer's disease and other types of cognitive impairments.³

Symptoms of Diabetes in Older Adults

Early signs and symptoms of diabetes vary between seniors. For some, the symptoms are mild and can go unnoticed for a while. Others encounter obvious signs. If you or a loved one experience any of the following symptoms, tell a healthcare provider to undergo diabetes testing and evaluation:³

- Increased thirst, hunger and urination
- Excessive fatigue
- Unintentional weight loss
- Dizziness or fainting
- Headaches
- Tingling sensation in hands or feet
- Blurry vision
- Slow healing wounds
- Dry skin and mouth
- Gum problems

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Tips for Seniors Managing Diabetes

Because older adults often have other existing conditions, special considerations need to be made to help them effectively manage their diabetes. It is vital for seniors with multiple coexisting chronic illnesses, cognitive impairments, or functional dependence to have in-home assistance while treating diabetes.² Your loved one's primary care doctor should collaborate closely with their other care providers to create a customized management plan. Consider consulting a dietician, physical therapist or another professional to ensure all aspects of care are taken into consideration.²

Here are some ways seniors can manage their diabetes while aging in place. However, please note that seniors should consult their doctor before making drastic lifestyle changes.



Track glucose levels. Having very high or very low glucose levels can be detrimental to one's health. Seniors should check their glucose or complete the A1C test according to their customized management plan.



Improve diet. The food we eat directly impacts our glucose levels. That's why it's important to eat nutritious foods in moderate amounts and stick to a regular meal schedule. Some recommended foods include whole grains, low-fat dairy products, salmon, nuts and other fiber-rich foods. Try to reduce sodium, cholesterol, trans fats and saturated fats intake.⁴



Embrace a more active lifestyle. Older adults should aim to be active most days of the week. Low-impact and light strengthening exercises can help improve glucose levels.



Take medication. Seniors should take their medicine as prescribed—even on days they feel like they aren't experiencing symptoms. Take note of any potential side effects or changes in your loved one's behavior and keep their doctor apprised of any changes.



Incorporate alternative methods. Studies have shown that alternative methods, such as yoga, acupuncture, hydrotherapy and massage therapy can be added to a senior's regimen to help reduce stress levels and combat diabetes side effects.⁵

Find Assistance through HomeWell

Many families seek professional assistance for their aging loved ones with diabetes. If you or a loved one feels overwhelmed by the everyday challenges and complications of treating this disease at home, HomeWell Care Services can offer them peace of mind. We are dedicated to providing the customized care and personalized attention your loved one needs to maintain their independence and enjoy the comforts of aging in place while helping them manage diabetes effectively.

Sources:

1. What is Diabetes? | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. Diabetes and Older Adults | Endocrine Society
3. Diabetes in Older People | National Institute on Aging
4. Diabetes Diet: Create your Healthy-Eating Plan | Mayo Clinic
5. Alternative Therapies Useful in the Management of Diabetes: A Systematic Review | National Library of Medicine

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