

## Diabetes and Physical Activities

### Suggestions for Radio messages

#### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease that cannot be cured, but it can be treated and controlled through lifestyle and medication. A diabetic person has a surplus of glucose (sugar) in his or her blood. The disease progressively damages organs such as the liver, eyes, pancreas, kidneys and the heart.

#### How to tell if you are diabetic?

If you have any of the following symptoms, consider visiting your CLSC:

- Dry mouth
- Frequent urination
- Frequent urinary infections
- Slow healing of wounds
- Extreme hunger and thirst (no sugar in the cell = no energy)
- Troubled vision
- Tingling in the fingers or feet
- Unexplainable weight loss

The body attempts to eliminate surplus sugar through urine. The person urinates more often, becomes dehydrated, has a dry mouth and thus becomes very thirsty.

Sugar is abundant in the blood but not in the cells, resulting in low energy and the brain sending a message to eat in order to have energy.

**Be vigilant: some diabetics have no symptoms.**

#### Why is blood sugar too high in people with diabetes?

The body produces a hormone called INSULIN, which allows sugar from food (glucose) to enter the cells and be transformed into energy. In a diabetic, this function does not occur correctly; thus we see an accumulation of sugar in the blood (hyperglycemia).

## What are the different types of diabetes?

- **Prediabetes or borderline diabetes**

Blood sugar is too high but the body still succeeds in compensating. It is a signal to adjust your lifestyle in order to prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes.

- **Type 2 diabetes**

This is the most frequent form of diabetes. The body has lost control and blood sugar remains too high. It is essential to adjust your lifestyle and take medication to prevent complications.

- **Gestational diabetes / “pregnancy diabetes”**

Some pregnant women develop a form of diabetes mainly due to the hormonal changes linked to pregnancy. In general, it disappears after childbirth, but the mother remains at risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

- **Type 1 diabetes**

This is the rarest form of the disease. The body is unable to produce the insulin necessary to control blood sugar levels and thus requires daily insulin doses.

## What are the risks of developing type 2 diabetes?

The risks are higher among people that:

- ✓ Are overweight
- ✓ Engage in fewer than 30 minutes of physical activity per day
- ✓ Have a diabetic family member (hereditary factor)
- ✓ Are 40 years old or older have a high level of stress
- ✓ Had gestational diabetes

## What should a diabetic person do?

- **Eat well:** Consume less sugar and drink less alcohol.
- **Be active:** Help the body burn surplus sugar.
- **Stop smoking:** Reduce the risk of complications associated with diabetes.
- **Take the prescribed medication:** Set an alarm on a cell phone or ask someone for help in maintaining a schedule for taking medication.

- **Prevent infections:** Check daily that wounds are healing properly (especially on the legs), get the flu vaccine every year and get an annual dental checkup at the CLSC.
- **Undergo tests:** Get followed up by the CLSC physician or nurse.
- **Take care of self:** Control stress levels through outdoor activities and relaxation.

### **What are the possible complications of diabetes?**

Surplus blood sugar can cause complications that are not always visible:

- Loss of nerve function or pain in the hands or legs
- Infections or ulcers on the legs
- Troubled vision or loss of vision
- Erectile dysfunction (difficulty getting or maintaining an erection)
- Shortness of breath with pain, overheating and rash on the calves