



Type II Diabetes: The New Epidemic

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What is type II diabetes? Type II diabetes is insulin resistance that can progress to decreased insulin production. Insulin is a hormone that regulates metabolism. It regulates conversion of carbohydrates into glucose and helps feed the muscles and fatty tissue. In type II diabetes, glucose and free fatty acids are chronically high because the tissues are resistant to the effects of insulin. It is estimated that 7% of the population have diabetes, which is about 21 million people. Of those 21 million people, 90-95% has type II diabetes.

Screening for type 2 diabetes has become even more important for people at risk. Risk factors include family history of diabetes, hypertension, obesity, history of impaired glucose tolerance, high risk ethnic or racial group (African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander), dyslipidemia, gestational diabetes, sedentary lifestyle, delivery of a baby over 9 lbs, polycystic ovarian syndrome, and history of vascular disease.

If you have a number of those risk factors it is important to get tested for type II diabetes. If diagnosed with type II diabetes exercise and diet become important to your lifestyle. It is best to begin an exercise prescription that consists aerobic training of 20-30 minutes, 4-7 days per week and resistance training 8-10 repetitions of 8-10 muscle groups for 2-3 days per week. Monitoring of your blood sugars before exercise is imperative. Contraindications to exercise include ingesting alcohol 3 hours prior to exercise, blood sugars less than 70 mg/dl (hypoglycemia) and blood sugars greater than 300 mg/dl (hyperglycemia).

Without a change in diet and exercise, chronic type II diabetes will likely get worse. Chronic type II diabetes can lead to blindness; accelerated cardiovascular disease leading to heart attacks and stroke; peripheral vascular disease leading to difficulty in wound healing, foot breakdown, and amputation; and neuropathy or nerve damage. Patients should consult their doctor before beginning any exercise program.