

Diabetes

Introduction

Diabetes is one of the so-called lifestyle diseases. The incidence of diabetes in Africa has vastly increased, and Africa has the largest number of cases of diabetes that have not been diagnosed.



The “lifestyle” causes of diabetes include obesity, lack of exercise and a poor diet. Over the past 50 years many people have become physically much less active, and the diet of most people has changed dramatically. It includes vastly more sugar, fats and salt, and much less fruit and vegetables.

Commercial fizzy drinks are popular, but are a death-trap! In only 33ml of Coca cola there is the equivalent of 10 cubes of sugar.

Persons with diabetes cannot process sugar properly Diabetes can start at any time in life but is usually more serious in young people.

Types of diabetes

There are two types of diabetes. In type one diabetes the body stops producing insulin which we need to control our sugar levels. The patient must take insulin by injection regularly or they are in danger of falling into a coma.

The second type, more common form of diabetes (*Diabetes mellitus*) occurs when the body cannot use the insulin produced by the pancreas. The sugar imbalance leads to increased urination and thirst.

Diabetes leads to the narrowing of the smaller blood vessels throughout the body Thus the blood vessels carry less blood, which, if diabetes is not well controlled, leads to complications such as kidney disease, poor wound healing and foot and eye problems.

Symptoms of diabetes

In the early stages of diabetes, the patient may:

- be thirsty all the time.
- urinate often, and a lot.
- always feel tired.
- always feel hungry.
- lose a lot of weight.

In the later stages of diabetes, the patient may show the more serious symptoms of:

- itchy skin.
- times when eyesight is blurred.
- some loss of feeling in hands or feet.
- frequent vaginal infections.
- sores on the feet that do not heal.
- in extreme cases, loss of consciousness.

All these signs could also be due to other diseases. A blood and urine test in a health centre will confirm whether the complaint is diabetes. If diabetes is confirmed, regular tests are necessary to ensure it is under control.

Patients with type I diabetes must inject themselves with insulin. Type 2 is very much more common. It is closely connected with obesity and can be greatly helped by exercise and diet.

Necessary lifestyle changes

People who are overweight should lose weight. Walk briskly for one hour every day.

Do not eat any sugar or sweets, nor foods that taste sweet. Avoid sugary drinks. Eat lots of high-fibre foods such as raw vegetables, especially carrots, whole grain bread, starchy foods like beans, rice and potatoes. These foods help the body to keep blood sugar levels stable. Eat foods high in protein such as moringa and grain amaranth. Drink good water and herbal teas (without sugar). Eat fresh fruit, but avoid fruit juices, because the lack of fibre increases the absorption of natural sugars.

Because diabetes can affect the blood circulation, people with diabetes are prone to infection and injury to the skin. Therefore, always clean your teeth after eating, keep your skin clean and always wear shoes to prevent foot injuries.

If the circulation in the feet is poor (dark colour, numbness), do not spend too much time standing but often sit with the feet elevated. If you must stand a lot, keep moving.

Natural treatments and recommendations for the diet

1. **Moringa oleifera:** Many people use *Moringa oleifera* to manage both diabetes and high blood pressure. The late Peter Kuria in Kenya had considerable success in treating diabetes. First, he asked his patient to drink a litre of what he called “detoxification tea”, made by taking one handful each of asthma weed (*Euphorbia hirta*), guava leaves, pawpaw leaves and fresh young mango leaves, washing them, boiling them vigorously in a litre of water for two minutes and allowing the mixture to stand for half an hour.

He then recommended that, twice a day, patients mix one tablespoonful of moringa leaf powder into their food and eat 2 moringa seeds.
2. **Maize (*Zea mays*):** Take 15g dried maize hair and boil it in 1 litre of water for 5 minutes. Drink the litre in equal measures throughout the day.
3. **Onion (*Allium cepa*):** Try to include ½ cup chopped, raw onion in the diet every day. The skin of onion is rich in quercetin, which has been shown to help with eye problems associated with diabetes. When cooking, therefore, include the onion skins in the stew or soup so that this compound goes into the dish.
4. **Garlic (*Allium sativum*):** Eat some garlic with your food each day.
5. **Haricot beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*):** Soak dried bean pods (10g) in 1 litre of water overnight, then bring to the boil, and filter. Drink this water during the day.
6. **Guava (*Psidium guajava*):** Make guava tea; take one handful guava leaves (i.e. the amount the patient can hold, or hide, in his or her fist) and add one litre water. Boil for two minutes in a covered pot, allow to stand for half an hour and then filter. Drink in in the course of the day.
7. **Neem (*Azadirachta indica*):** The Indian Neem Foundation recommends that one takes one level teaspoon (5ml) of neem leaf juice daily on an empty stomach each morning for three months. An alternative is to chew or eat the powder from 10 dried and pounded neem leaves daily in the morning See <http://www.neemfoundation.org/about-neem/neem-and-health/neem-cures/>
8. **Periwinkle (*Vinca rosea, syn. Catharanthus rosea*)** – must only be used in a crisis if no other plants are available: Put 5g of dried leaves or 1 handful (the amount that the patient can hide in the hand) of fresh leaves in 1 litre of boiling water, then leave to steep for 15 minutes. Filter and drink in equal measures throughout the day.

Note: Some information in this paper has been taken from the anamed publication by Hirt and M’Pia, “Natural Medicine in the Tropics I: Foundation Text”, 3rd Edition 2008.

Disclaimer: Discover has compiled this information with the best possible interests of its colleagues in Africa at heart. Discover cannot be held responsible for any negative consequence of following the procedures described in this paper.