



## Understanding Diabetes

by Dorit Ben-Moha, MD

Diabetes affects millions of Americans, young and old, and it is on the rise. There are two types of diabetes—Type I begins in childhood and Type II develops later in life. One of the biggest risk factors for diabetes in adults is obesity.

Obesity is an epidemic in America and it is becoming a problem in many other countries where it did not exist before. People who are obese are at greater risk for diabetes. This is because they have too many fat cells in their body, which leads to higher levels of sugar circulating in the blood stream. As blood sugar rises, so does insulin. In response to the surging sugar, the pancreas secretes extra insulin. Diabetes develops when the body can't make enough insulin, or properly use the insulin it makes.

When diabetes develops, diet and exercise, with or without medication, are the only options available to regulate the rising blood sugar. If the diabetes is due to being overweight, most of the time lifestyle changes like diet and exercise will get rid of the problem, or at least allow for less medication. If the diabetes is not weight-related but genetic in nature, then the route is to curb carbohydrates

and starches and begin medication—be it tablets or insulin.

Diabetes affects every major organ in the body—from the eyes, heart and kidneys to blood vessels and nerves. Normal blood glucose is 110 or less—the lower the sugar the less damage to major organs.

There are two different types of tests your doctor can use to measure your blood glucose. The hemoglobin A1c test, called HgA1c for short, helps determine the severity of diabetes. A fasting blood glucose test can help as well, but the results can be less reliable. HgA1c is the red cell count that is tagged by glucose: the higher the glucose the more the tagging. Anything over 5.7 and less than 6.5 is considered pre-diabetic, while anything over 6.5 is considered full-blown diabetes.

Doctors treat patients with diabetes as if they had heart disease. This is because diabetes affects the small vessels of the heart as well as the brain, kidneys and legs. Patients often ask "is my cholesterol normal?" When a patient has diabetes, their doctor will focus on treating cholesterol levels just as if they had heart disease. For people with diabetes, LDL—

### HeartShare Wellness

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Telephone: 718-855-7707  
 Fax: 718-855-7717  
 Website: [heartsharewellness.org](http://heartsharewellness.org)

#### HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
 Tuesday & Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
 Wednesday 8:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
 Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
 Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Call us for more information, to make an appointment or in case of an emergency.

#### CLINIC LOCATION

177 Livingston Street, Lower Level  
 Brooklyn, New York 11201  
 Entrance on Gallatin Place

#### DIRECTIONS

**By Subway:** 2, 3, 4 or 5 train to Borough Hall / Court Street. A, C or F train to Jay Street / Borough Hall. R train to Borough Hall / Court Street  
**By Bus:** B26, B38, B41, B52, B54

the bad cholesterol—should be between 60-80 or even lower. We try to help patients increase HDL, the good cholesterol, to 45 and higher. To reach these numbers, most diabetics must be on medication. The aim is to prevent heart disease, in particular a heart attack. Unfortunately, most people who have had diabetes for a long time lose their ability to sense or feel. A physician will often pick it up by doing some form of nerve conduction study in addition to bedside neurologic exam.

The same applies with infection. For instance, a person with diabetes might scratch their foot, but because there is loss of sensory feeling they do not recognize the infection until it is out of control and in need of medical care. Many people with diabetes also will have vascular issues with their legs related to diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease. These patients might at some point need bypass surgery of the major arteries in the thighs to improve circulation. When surgery is unsuccessful, it can lead to amputation of a toe, foot, a leg below the knee, or the entire leg.

People with diabetes may also be more susceptible to strokes or mini-strokes in the brain. There is no way to predict which problems a patient will have, but the more risk factors a patient has the higher the risk. So if the patient has a BMI (body mass index) greater than 30 with high cholesterol and elevated blood pressure, then the risk for stroke is far greater than 75%.

That is why we repeatedly coach our patients on eating right and exercising. The aim is to be healthy. Many people equate health with being thin. Yet many thin people walk around with medical problems. Type II diabetes related to weight can be eradicated or improved with weight loss. Being healthy can mean that you range in clothing size from 2-20, but that you are in the best physical shape possible for your size and weight.

Usually, the first sign of a problem with diabetes is simply feeling fatigued. Then you might experience achiness, blurred vision, increased urination and thirst, increased craving for sugary foods, or simply not feeling right. Patients usually ignore these symptoms until they get worse and need medical care. Although people are better informed today than they used to be, there is still quite a bit of denial and lack of knowledge.

One of the biggest offenders is the fast food industry. The portions are bigger, cheaper and loaded with sugar and starches. If we do not cut back on carbohydrates, the epidemic of obesity and diabetes will only increase. Today, more and more American children are obese, not just adults. Fortunately, many schools have gotten the health message and now provide healthier lunches and snacks for their students.

I tell all my patients to read labels because there are many hidden sugars in packaged goods. Reading and understanding food labels can help you choose healthier foods. What's important is NOT the calorie count on the label—it is what those calories are made of! Whether you have diabetes or not, it is important to read food labels so you know what you are eating. Did you know that when you eat foods high in sugar, you are also increasing your fat intake? That's because if you eat too much sugar it turns into fat—it's that simple! If you are trying to lose weight, try to keep the packaged glucose to 25 grams. Stay away from products that say "low fat" or "low sodium" because that means more sugar. If you are also watching your salt (sodium), try to keep salt between 1,000-1,500 for the whole day.

In short, diabetes is a killer that can silently ruin your eyes, kidneys, feet, heart, blood vessels, and nerves. The idea is to keep your sugar intake as low as possible so that over time there is less organ damage. Renal failure and blindness affects many diabetics. But it doesn't have to. The answer is to eat better and exercise right.

## Check out these resources if you want to know more about Diabetes

### American Diabetes Association

For reliable, easy to understand information in English and Spanish

<http://www.diabetes.org>

### Center for Disease Control - Division of Diabetes Translation

Translates diabetes research into daily practice to understand the impact of the disease, influence health outcomes, and improve access to quality health care.

[www.cdc.gov/diabetes](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes)

### Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International

<http://www.jdrf.org>

### National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse – A service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov>



# Allergies and Sun Precautions

Sneezing. Weepy eyes. Headache. Sinus pressure. Runny nose. Scratchy throat. Itchy eyes, nose or skin. Does this sound like you? You're not alone!

## Allergies

Spring is here! And that means seasonal allergies, also known as hay fever. About 35 million Americans suffer from seasonal allergies, according to the Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. Many people are highly sensitive to the airborne pollens released by trees, grasses, weeds, and bushes. When a person with seasonal allergies comes in contact with pollen, their immune system releases chemicals called histamines to combat the allergens. Histamines produce those dreaded hay fever symptoms, including sneezing, headache, runny nose, and watery eyes. Pollen from trees in early spring and grass in summer can make you feel very uncomfortable. Molds in outdoor air can also contribute to seasonal allergies.

But there are many things you can do to lessen those nasty symptoms and relieve the discomfort. Here are five simple steps you can take to minimize your suffering:

1. Keep doors and windows closed at home to help prevent pollens and outdoor molds from entering. When you're tempted to open windows to let in fresh air, it may be better to keep them closed and turn on the air conditioner.
2. Limit outdoor activity in the morning

when pollen counts are highest, typically from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

3. When traveling by car, keep the windows closed to help keep out pollen, dust and mold.

4. Take a shower and change clothes if you've been outside for more than a few hours. Did you know that pollen settles on your clothes and collects in your hair? Showering and changing into fresh clothes helps!

5. Ask your doctor about using over-the-counter antihistamines for relief. These medications can be very effective in minimizing allergy symptoms. Some, like Benedryl, can make you feel drowsy. Others, like Claritin or Zyrtec, are formulated to reduce or prevent drowsiness in most people. If you take other medications, be sure to talk to your doctor before taking antihistamines to prevent any adverse side effects.

## Sun Precautions

Protecting yourself against sun exposure is important all year round, not just during the summer months or at the beach. The sun emits ultraviolet (UV) rays that can reach you on cloudy and hazy days, as well as bright and sunny days. UV rays also reflect off of surfaces like water, cement, sand, and snow.

The sun's rays are most hazardous between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. In North



America, UV rays are the greatest during the late spring and early summer.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends easy options for sun protection:

- Sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 30 or higher is recommended, and both UVA and UVB protection.
- Wear clothing to protect exposed skin.
- Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck.
- Wear sunglasses that wrap around and block up to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays.
- Seek shade, especially during midday hours.

## Did You Know?

### Phytochemicals

They are difficult to pronounce but good for you!

Did you know that fruits and vegetables contain phytochemicals? What is a phytochemical, you ask?

Phytochemicals are naturally-occurring chemical substances found in plants that can help prevent disease. Over 1,000 of them have already been identified, and new ones are being discovered all the time. They are found in fruits, vegetables, beans, grains, and other plants. The wonderful thing about these plant-based substances is that they can play a positive role in keeping people healthy, like reducing the risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Take a carrot, for example. It contains

more than 100 phytochemicals! Its bright orange color comes from beta-carotene, a phytochemical. You can also find beta-carotene in other orange-colored fruits and vegetables like yams, squash, cantaloupes, and apricots.

Lycopene, another phytochemical, gives the red color to tomatoes. Scientists are studying lycopene because there is good evidence that eating cooked tomato products, like tomato sauce, may reduce the risk of prostate cancer.

Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, contain a phytochemical called indole-3-carbinol, which is thought to protect against breast cancer.

You may already be familiar with well-known phytochemicals like ascorbic acid (vitamin C), folic acid and vitamin E. Although many are available as dietary supplements, it's more beneficial to eat them in their natural whole-



food form. So enjoy your vitamin C by eating an orange, kiwi or handful of berries. It's more enjoyable and better for you!

While it may not seem natural to think of vegetables and fruits as containing "chemicals," it does prove that mom was right: "Good food is nature's best medicine!"

# Diabetes and Your Eyes

by Melissa H. Wohl, OD

Did you know that in the United States diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in adults? Diabetes damage usually shows up first in the fingers, toes, kidneys, and eyes. That's because these organs suffer the most from a lack of oxygen caused by too much sugar in the blood.

The eye doctor is an important part of the healthcare team managing an individual's diabetes. The eyes are the only organs that have "windows" that allow the eye doctor to see inside (through the pupils) and examine what's happening. The pupil is the small dark circle in the center of the eye.

The longer an individual has diabetes the more likely there will be eye damage. After 15 years, over 60% of diabetics will have some ocular (eye) damage, and after 30+ years almost all people with diabetes will experience ocular damage. That's why it's critical for all diabetics to have regular dilated eye exams—usually every 6 to 12 months. More frequent eye exams may be necessary depending on individual circumstances.

Diabetes damage can happen in almost every part of the eye. When it shows up in the retina, it's called diabetic retinopathy and is due to leaking blood vessels in the eye. It's possible that new blood vessels will grow, but unfortunately these vessels are also weak and prone to leak. The result is internal bleeding that can cause damage to the retina and permanent visual loss if not treated in a timely manner. An eye doctor can find these leaks during an eye exam and seal them as necessary with a laser. Lasers are also used to stop leaks in less important areas of the retina so that more oxygen can reach them.

People with diabetes are also at



increased risk of developing holes and tears in the retina, and even retinal detachments, where the retina becomes separated from the back of the eye. Any of these conditions can have severe visual consequences. Early treatment with laser or cryosurgery, however, can improve the chances for visual recovery. If the retina is not fixed, in time it will lose its supply of nutrients and die.

The lens of the eye is another risk area for diabetes damage. Diabetic cataracts develop earlier and more quickly than most other forms of cataracts. Treatment for cataracts involves surgery to replace the damaged lens with an artificial lens.

Diabetics are also at greater risk for bacterial eye infections including conjunctivitis. This is because diabetes affects the immune system, lowering an individual's natural resistance to disease. Practicing good hygiene is helpful in preventing infection, like washing your hands frequently and avoiding touching your eyes. Keeping your blood sugar stable is very important in preventing eye problems.

Fluctuating vision is another manifestation of diabetes. In fact, this is what often brings a person in for an eye exam. Changes in blood sugar levels can compromise the ability of the eye to maintain a clear focus. Again, keeping blood sugar levels stable is key.

People with well-controlled diabetes do better than those whose diabetes is not well-controlled. Even those with well-controlled diabetes, however, can experience diabetic retinopathy and other ocular changes. That's why comprehensive and regular eye exams are so critical. The sooner problems are diagnosed the better the prognosis. It is possible to lead a long and happy life with diabetes. The key is making sure to take care of your health.

# SPOTLIGHT ON David Biozes HeartShare Wellness Operations Manager

Each and every day at HeartShare Wellness, David Biozes has one primary goal—to make life easier for others. As the Operations Manager for HeartShare Wellness, he's in charge of all the administrative aspects of the clinic. He makes sure there are no delays or snags when prescriptions get called into a pharmacy. When a physician orders an important diagnostic procedure, he makes sure it gets done. And he's on-call 24/7 to help nurses and residence staff manage a medical crisis. No matter what the problem or situation, David is there to assure that the day goes smoothly and that clinicians have what they need to deliver high quality patient care.

David loves the excitement of his work. "To do this work and to do it well," says David, "you must enjoy working in a fast-paced environment. Every day is so different and full of great surprises! The days, weeks, and months go very quickly – it's non-stop and never boring." To David, the clinic sometimes has the feel of an emergency room – he describes it as 'organized chaos.' But no matter how busy it gets, patients and staff are always treated with dignity and respect. "At HeartShare Wellness," says David, "we never forget a 'thank you.' People are supportive of each other no matter how hectic the day. And that takes exceptional team work!" David relies on his dedicated team of four medical assistants for support. "Without them, we couldn't accomplish all that we do."

One of the greatest joys of David's work is the sense of accomplishment he gets at the end of the day. "Hearing the calm in someone's voice after a critical issue has been resolved is enormously satisfying," he says. "People call in a panic and are so relieved when I help them resolve an issue. And seeing patients' smiles and hearing the sighs of relief in their voices make my day!" David likes to joke with the residence managers: "You have 10 patients in your residence and I have 3,000+ in the clinic. Stay calm, we'll get through this!"

Little did David know that a chance meeting nearly 30 years ago would result in a job at HeartShare Wellness. In those days, David was working at Cornell University Medical College as a research assistant in an immunology laboratory. Dr. Jon Michnovicz, HeartShare Wellness's Medical Director, was doing research at Rockefeller University. The two met and stayed in touch. In January 2000, when the clinic was still in



its formative stage, Dr. Jon asked David if he would be interested in a position. That spring, HeartShare Wellness opened its doors for the first time, and David joined as a clinic assistant. Three years later, he became operations manager.

From the time he was 17-years-old and working as a volunteer in the operating room of New Jersey's JFK Medical Center, he knew what he wanted to do – work in the health care field and help others.

Biology and psychology were his majors at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. After graduating, he earned a Master's degree in developmental psychology. Later, while working at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, David attended New York University. Six years later he earned a second Master's degree, this time in public administration with a specialization in health care management.

Not by any means a dabbler, when David has an interest, he pursues it—in depth. As a young man, he was drawn to the works of Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, influential thinker and founder of Analytic Psychology. His theories would have a profound impact on generations to come.

At the age of 22, David joined the Jung Foundation where he studied for over 20 years. "Jung's work resonated," reflects David, "it spoke to me on many levels, in particular his idea of 'synchronicity.'" Simply put, it refers to why things happen. "Jung

didn't believe in coincidence or in the idea that things happen randomly," says David. When asked to give an example of synchronicity, "Sure," he responds, "I met Dr. Jon over 30 years ago. We stayed friends. In January 2000 he asks me if I'd like to join the staff of HeartShare Wellness. I do and here I am! SYNCHRONICITY!"

## SOME OF DAVID'S FAVORITES

### Favorite pastime

I'm a foodie! I like to eat at top-notch restaurants like Boulet, Jean George, Le Bernadette, and the Gotham Bar & Grill. For many years, I wrote restaurant reviews for Zagat. Give me a good paté and I'm in heaven!

### Favorite food

Any form of pasta

### Favorite cuisines

French and Italian with a good bottle of red wine

### Favorite new restaurant

I haven't been there yet

### Favorite books

Non-fiction, particularly books about psychology and travel. Also give me a good liberal economics book and I'm happy. I wouldn't be caught dead reading *Eat, Pray, Love*



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## Check Out Our New Clinic Website [www.heartsharewellness.org](http://www.heartsharewellness.org)

Check out the newest addition to HeartShare Wellness – our new website! All the information you need to know about HeartShare Wellness and is now available at your fingertips.

Click on the [About Us](#) tab at the top of the page and learn more about who we are, what we do, and about our team and board of directors. The [Services](#) tab gives you information about the kinds of clinical services we provide our patients – and there are a lot of them! You can even learn how to make an appointment and find information on the types of insurance we accept – all kinds from Medicaid and Medicare to private insurance. You can also access a referral form for rehabilitation services – we’ve thought of everything!

There’s a tab on [News & Events](#) so that we can keep you updated on the latest news and developments.

You’ll also be able to access digital copies of our newsletter, HealthBeat. Under the [Contact Us](#) tab, you’ll find our address, hours of operation and how to get here.

And, finally, we’re planning additional features to our website, including a link to a portal where patients and their families will be able to access their health records electronically – coming in 2013.

We look forward to serving you!



## Baseball Fundraiser to Benefit HeartShare Wellness

Join us for a fun-filled baseball fundraiser to benefit HeartShare Wellness. Come root for the home team as the Brooklyn Cyclones play the Tri-City Valley Cats at Municipal Credit Union Park in Coney Island, Brooklyn on August 21 at 5:00 p.m. All proceeds from ticket sales benefit the clinic. Tickets are \$25 each.

Contact Jude Alexander, Clinic Director, via email at [jude.alexandre@heartshare.org](mailto:jude.alexandre@heartshare.org) or telephone (718) 855-7707, ext. 8018 to order your tickets.