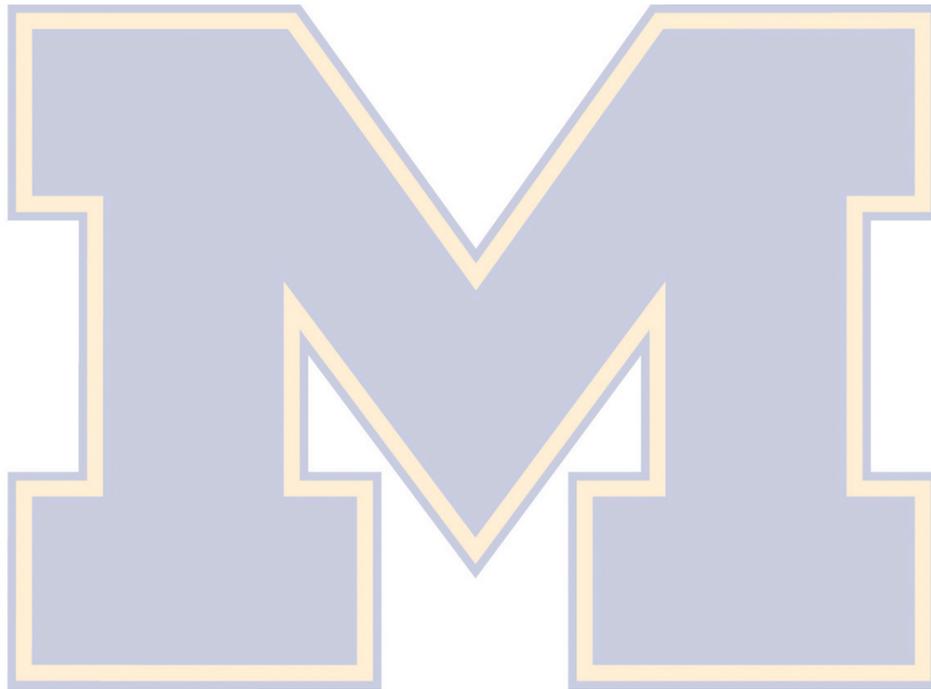


Newsletter #8



Balancing Food, Exercise, and Medicine

Your blood sugar is affected by food, physical activity, and insulin. If you did not have diabetes, your body would balance these things all by itself. Your blood sugar would stay at about the same level, between 70-120 mg/dl most of the time. But because you have diabetes, your blood sugar goes up faster and higher after you eat and usually comes down more slowly. This happens because you do not have enough insulin at just the right time or your body is not able to use insulin effectively. People with diabetes need to help their bodies keep their blood sugar levels close to normal by carefully balancing food, exercise, stress and medicine.

Food causes your blood sugar to go up. Some foods, like fruit juice, cause your blood sugar to go up fairly quickly. Other foods, like whole grain bread cause your blood sugar to go up more slowly. Your meal plan has different kinds of food to help keep your blood sugar even. You can find out how different foods affect your blood sugar by checking your blood sugar two hours after you start a meal. Having this information helps you make decisions about what to eat.

Exercise will usually cause your blood sugar to go down. If you exercise every day, but miss one day, your blood sugar will probably be higher that day. It also works the other way too. If you usually don't exercise, but one day you are more active than usual, your blood sugar will probably be lower that day. Activities that you do once in a while, like mowing the lawn, heavy housework or raking leaves, can cause your blood sugar to go down.

Stress also affects your blood sugar. Some people find that their blood sugar is higher when they feel stressed while others find that their blood sugar drops when they feel stressed.

Diabetes medicines including insulin cause your blood sugar to go down. But if your dose is too big, or you eat less than usual or skip a meal your blood sugar will go too low (less than 70 mg/dL). If you forget to take your diabetes medicine or you need a larger dose, your blood sugar may be too high.

Keeping your blood sugar and blood pressure near the normal range can help to prevent or delay the long-term complications of diabetes. You will also feel better. A good way to keep your blood sugar levels in balance is to plan ahead. Keep in mind the need to balance your food, activity, and medicine. Get to know how each of these affects your blood sugar. One way to do this is by keeping a record of your blood sugar levels, and writing down the foods you eat or if the size of your meal is usual or larger or smaller than usual, your activity level, your stress levels and what medicine you took. You can use your records to get a picture of your blood sugar patterns all through the day. These records can help you make informed choices and help you and your health care team to plan your care.

It is not easy to keep everything balanced. It is common to have times when your blood sugar readings do not make sense or do not seem to reflect your efforts. If things do not go well one day, try again the next. When things go right, take the time to feel good about what your hard work. Keep trying. Keeping your diabetes in balance is done one day at a time.

Ask your doctor or nurse the following questions:

1. Will you show me how to adjust my insulin to keep my blood sugars in my target range?
2. Will you show me how to balance my exercise with my meal plan and medicine to keep my blood sugars in my target range?

Ask your dietitian the following question:

1. Will you show me how to adjust my meal plan to keep my blood sugars in my target range?