Complications Quiz

With one out of three people with diabetes experiencing some form of complication, keeping these problems at bay first requires knowing what could go wrong. Consistently high blood sugars can impact every part of the body from head to toe; physical and emotional issues can arise. Think you have a good understanding of diabetes complications? Test yourself.

Reviewed by Jason C. Baker, MD. 03/13

1) Diabetes can cause numbness or a burning feeling in my hands, fingers, and feet.
   a) True
   b) False

That's correct! Diabetic neuropathy, or nerve damage, can impact up to 60 percent of people with diabetes. The biggest risk factor for developing neuropathy is uncontrolled blood glucose levels, and the incidence of neuropathy in diabetes increases with time. When the hands and feet are affected, it's known as peripheral neuropathy.

2) Diabetes often causes poor circulation.
   a) True
   b) False

That’s correct! Among the cardiovascular complications of diabetes is peripheral arterial disease, in which a buildup of arterial fat slows blood circulation. People with diabetes are unable to properly digest the sugar they eat. This sugar builds up and causes changes in their blood vessels.

3) Sexual problems can be caused by the emotional stress of diabetes.
   a) True
   b) False

It is true, though that’s not the whole story. While stress is a common cause of
sexual dysfunction in people with diabetes, it can also be a result of diabetes related nerve damage. Sexual dysfunction can be embarrassing, but it’s also highly treatable. If you’re experiencing sexual complications, you doctor may be able to help.

4) When you have had diabetes for a long time, amputation is a certainty.
   a) True
   b) False

You’re right! For the most part, limb loss is preventable. A diagnosis of diabetes does not mean you’re going to lose your feet and legs. To keep your feet safe, control your blood sugar, and examine your feet daily for any cuts or abnormal wear.

5) High blood sugar can cause cavities.
   a) True
   b) False

Believe it or not, that’s correct. Seems too simple to be true, but the buildup of glucose in your blood affects all parts of your body, including your teeth. The extra sugar that resides in your mouth gives the bacteria something to feed on and this can result in tooth decay. This is why it’s important to see your dentist at least twice a year and to keep your blood glucose as under control as you can in between visits.

6) Glaucoma is the most common vision related complication of diabetes.
   a) True
   b) False

That’s right! People with diabetes are at a higher risk of glaucoma. However, retinopathy is the most common vision related diabetes problem. Retinopathy occurs when the blood vessels leading to the retina of the eye become blocked and/or leak fluid or blood (hemorrhage) into the eye. Early diagnosis and treatment can stop vision loss, so make sure to have at least an annual examination by your diabetes eye doctor.

(NEXT)
7) Diabetes can damage my kidneys.
   a) True
   b) False

   It’s true. Diabetes is the number one cause of chronic kidney (or renal) failure in the U.S. and kidney disease among people with diabetes has more than doubled in the past decade. The good news is that with early detection and proper treatment, kidney disease can be slowed and, in some cases, reversed.

8) Erectile dysfunction and heart disease share risk factors.
   a) True
   b) False

   You’re right. Erectile dysfunction and cardiovascular disease share many of the same risk factors, including diabetes, hypertension, smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.

9) Slow digestion is healthy.
   a) True
   b) False

   You’re right! Gastroparesis, also called delayed gastric emptying, is a disorder in which the stomach takes too long to empty its contents. It can occur in people with poorly-controlled diabetes. If food lingers too long in the stomach, it can cause problems like bacterial overgrowth from the fermentation of food, nausea, vomiting, and obstruction in the stomach.

10) Occasional spikes in blood sugar won’t impact your brain.
    a) True
    b) False

    You’re right! Recent scientific research has shown that extreme blood glucose levels can interfere with cognitive function and can even increase the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.
11) Dry skin is just a sign that you need to drink more water.

a) True
b) False

You’re right! Staying well hydrated is important; however, dry skin in people with diabetes could be a symptom of some other problem. Nerve and blood vessel damage and dehydration from chronic high blood sugar can cause dry skin. Dry, cracked skin can be a breeding ground for infection.

Results

You got ____ out of 11!

If you got 9 to 11 correct, you’ve got a good understanding of diabetes complications, which means you keep yourself informed. Congratulations! Information is power!

If you got 5 to 8 correct, you’re off to a good start, but it would be good to learn a few more things to keep diabetes complications from affecting your life.

If you got 0 to 4 correct, you have a lot to learn still. The more you know, the more control you have over diabetes and its potential consequences.

SOURCES:
