

DICKINSON COUNTY DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP

Memorial Health System

Understanding How Diabetes Can Cause Weight Loss

By Dr. Rosalind Yong

Weight loss is a common problem. People who are obese may wish to lose weight to improve their health. However, progressive unintentional weight loss often rings an alarm that something is wrong. Excluding unexpected weight loss due to a known illness or as a consequence of treatment, unintentional weight loss is defined as a loss of more than 5 percent of usual body weight over the period of 6 to 12 months.

Cachexia refers to loss of muscle mass which can occur with or without fat loss, and sarcopenia is a fancy name for loss of muscle mass, strength, and performance which in particular affects the elderly. Though weight loss is frequently attributed to cancer, diabetes mellitus is actually a common cause.

The Correlation Between Diabetes and Weight Loss

Uncontrolled diabetes can cause weight loss with increased appetite, particularly with new-onset type 1 diabetes. Adults with type 1 diabetes typically have a long latent period before diagnosis and are likely to have protracted symptoms of high blood sugar, also known as “hyperglycemia”. The classic symptoms of hyperglycemia include:

- polyuria (the frequent passing of urine)
- polydipsia (feeling thirsty and a need to drink lots of water)
- nocturia (waking up in the evening to pass urine)
- blurred vision
- weight loss

Polyuria is the first sign. Frequent passing of urine happens when the blood glucose concentration rises significantly above 180 mg/dL (10 mmol/L), exceeding the kidney threshold for sugar reabsorption, which leads to increased excretion of sugar in the urine. At this point, sugar can be detected on a urine dipstick test or by urine analysis. The continuous passing out of sugar will further draw out water from the body and cause depletion in the body’s fluid volume. This, in turn, can lead to a constant sense of thirst – polydipsia. Those who replete their volume losses with concentrated sugar drinks, such as non-diet sodas, sweetened fruit juices, etc will exacerbate this vicious cycle.

Although patients with poorly controlled or undiagnosed type 2 diabetes are well-known to be obese, they can present with weight loss as well. Some patients with type 2 diabetes can present with diabetic neuropathic cachexia, an unusual and poorly understood syndrome characterized by profound weight loss (as much as 60 percent of body weight) and often severe neuropathic pain of the anterior thighs.

Rarely adults with type 2 diabetes can present with confusion or coma, which is an emergency. They will be having extremely high blood sugar, severe dehydration, and a change in mental alertness. When there is a concurrent serious infection or illness, it can give rise to another type of emergency called diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) which can result in death.

Getting Positive: Preventive Measures for All

Fortunately, actions can be taken to prevent these situations from happening and from going undetected. So, exactly what measures need to be taken?

Diabetes Support Group meets the first Tuesday of every month.

Join us on
July 5, 2022
at 12:00 pm in
Memorial Hospital
Conference Room B

Understanding How Diabetes Can Cause Weight Loss Continued...

We can:

- Monitor the vital signs: blood pressure, pulse
- Chart weight on a regular basis
- Log the physical activities done
- Perform regular health checks
- Screen for diabetes by blood and urine tests
- Watch our calories and dietary intake

Commonly used screening tests are fasting blood tests for glucose, urine analysis, and a special test called HbA1c, which checks for the percentage of sugar sticking onto the red blood cell.

Diabetes is associated with high blood pressure and heart disease. Progressive or sudden weight loss can be a sign of the onset of diabetes as discussed above; hence adopting a “can do” attitude with frequent self-monitoring can keep these dangers at bay.

Don't Forget Exercise

Another significant step to take is increasing physical activity and getting away from a sedentary lifestyle. Increased physical activity generates great health benefits and improves sugar control. It plays an important role in preventing the onset of diabetes, especially in people who have borderline raised fasting sugar levels, known as “impaired glucose tolerance”. Exercise reduces the chances of developing heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis and helps to maintain the blood pressure in check. When physical exercise is combined with a healthy dietary intake, it certainly is a win-win formula.

July's Featured Recipe: *Star Spangled Parfaits*

Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh strawberries, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 cups fresh blueberries
- 4 teaspoons reduced-fat raspberry walnut vinaigrette
- 3/4 cup fat-free vanilla or strawberry Greek yogurt
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh mint
- Unsweetened shredded coconut, optional

Directions

- Place strawberries and blueberries in separate bowls. Drizzle each with 2 teaspoons vinaigrette; toss to coat. In a small bowl, mix yogurt and mint.
- Spoon strawberries into 4 parfait glasses. Layer each with yogurt mixture and blueberries. If desired, top with coconut.

Nutrition Facts

1 parfait (calculated without coconut): 172 calories, 7g fat (5g saturated fat), 0 cholesterol, 41mg sodium, 24g carbohydrate (17g sugars, 5g fiber), 5g protein. **Diabetic Exchanges:** 1 fruit, 1 fat, 1/2 starch.

Source: Taste of Home



I'm always looking for great ideas for speakers and activities! If you have something you would like more information on, or a topic that you find interesting, please feel free to send me an email or give me a call.

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