



From the Health Concerns Committee

National Diabetes Awareness Month (COVID-19 and Diabetes)

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month. COVID-19 has impacted the realities of diabetes. Approximately 30 million Americans (9 percent) have diabetes and another 84 million Americans (26 percent) have pre-diabetes. Nearly 40% of those Americans who have died of COVID-19 have had diabetes. While Type 1 diabetics are more at risk than the general population, those with Type 2 Diabetes are at an even higher risk. Older people are also at higher risk.

In general, people with diabetes have more severe symptoms and complications when infected with any virus. However, the more health conditions someone has (for example, diabetes plus heart disease), adds to their risk of getting worse complications and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. Viral infections increase inflammation and internal swelling in people with diabetes and more than one condition makes it harder for the body to fight the infection. Diabetes lowers life expectancy by up to 15 years, increases the risk of heart disease by 2 to 4 times, and is the leading cause of kidney failure, lower limb amputations, and adult-onset blindness.

If your diabetes is well-managed, the risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 is likely to be lower. The important thing to remember: Your diabetes can be controlled. Through good self-management skills, lifestyle changes such as weight loss, being more physically active, managing stress, making healthy eating decisions, and collaboration with a health care provider, you can still live a healthy, fulfilling, active life while preventing complications.

Knowing your risk factors for diabetes is very important. Families often share a genetic risk of diabetes. Each year, experts urge families to observe National Diabetes Month right along with Thanksgiving, taking the opportunity to discuss their family health history when everyone is together. This year, to prevent the spread of the virus, many families will be having virtual get togethers online. But that doesn't mean they can't have the conversation and take time to create a family health history. This information can encourage family members to be tested for diabetes. These talks are something life-affirming for which the whole family can be thankful!