

## DIABETES – a time for action

# Diabetes prevention and management requires more than good intentions

For good health in general, and diabetes prevention and management in particular, the number one piece of medical advice boils down to a simple directive: eat right and exercise. But while most of us have good intentions about following Canada's Food Guide and getting up off the couch at least three times a week, many people have a tough time regularly incorporating healthy habits into their daily lives.

Why we don't do what we know we should do – known as the "intention-behaviour gap" – is the focus of Dr. Ryan Rhodes' research at the Behavioural Medicine (BMED) lab at the University of Victoria, B.C. In a recent study, Dr. Rhodes found that families who schedule activity times are more likely to follow through on their intentions. "Families are so busy, if activity isn't scheduled and protected, it vanishes," he says.

The other key is to choose an activity you like. "When you're busy and tired, you're not going

to do an activity if you find it unpleasant," says Dr. Rhodes. Interactive gaming, such as the fitness games for PlayStation or Wii, may be a solution for some. "They are fun, convenient and don't depend on the weather," he says. Brisk walking is another great option to get the heart rate up.

Personal preference also plays a role when it comes to diet. "As long as you are losing weight, the macronutrient composition may not be so important, but you want to choose a diet you can maintain over the long run and will benefit you once you reach your target weight," says Dr. Alexandra Jenkins, research associate at the Risk Factor Modification Centre, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto. "The bottom line is that anything you do to achieve a healthy weight will benefit your health." For example, a reduction of just five per cent of your body weight will halve your risk of developing diabetes, she says.

For long-term healthy eating habits, Dr. Jenkins advocates a



While most of us have good intentions about following Canada's Food Guide, many people have a tough time regularly incorporating healthy habits into their daily lives. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

meal plan higher in plant based, unprocessed foods and fibre, lower in saturated fat, with at least one low Glycemic Index (GI) food at each meal every day. "Evidence shows that regularly consuming low GI foods can help reduce the risk of developing pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes, heart disease and many cancers, and improve long-term diabetes control," she says.

Dr. Jenkins is currently researching the effect of an omega-3 rich grain known as salba. Preliminary results suggest that consuming this grain, which is available in health food stores, can improve blood glucose control in people with diabetes, reduce cardiovascular risk factors and may help with weight loss.

Despite salba's potential health benefits, Dr. Jenkins emphasizes that this is only one component of a healthy lifestyle. "There is no magic solution," she says. "The key message for good health is to watch your diet, keep moving and keep your weight under control."

## checklist

### Your diabetes-focused visit

It is important that certain visits with your health-care team focus specifically on your diabetes.

#### What to expect

- To be seen four times a year for diabetes care
- Review of recent laboratory tests
- Measurement of your blood pressure
- Examination of your feet at least once a year
- Referral to an eye care professional (usually once a year)
- Assessment of your risk for heart attack and stroke
- Conversation about exercise, food choices, smoking, mood and sexual function

#### How to prepare

- Have laboratory tests done prior to your visit.
- Bring blood glucose records with you (written down or printed from meter).
- Bring a list of all medications including non-prescription drugs and let team know which need to be refilled.
- Write down any questions about your diabetes.
- Save any non-urgent, non-diabetes questions for another visit. This will ensure that your diabetes gets the full attention it deserves.



### Are you heading in a healthy direction?

Keeping your blood pressure and certain other measurements at target will help you avoid diabetes complications such as heart attack, stroke, and damage to your eyes, nerves and kidneys.

#### BLOOD PRESSURE

Should be checked at each diabetes visit.

Target blood pressure: **Less than 130/80**      Date: \_\_\_\_\_      My Blood Pressure: \_\_\_\_\_

#### CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol should be measured with a fasting blood test every 1 to 3 years, and after a change in cholesterol treatment.

Target LDL cholesterol: **2.0 or less**      Date: \_\_\_\_\_      My LDL: \_\_\_\_\_

#### A1C

This blood test measures your blood glucose control over three months. Most people with diabetes should have an A1C every three months.

Target A1C: **7.0% or less**      Date: \_\_\_\_\_      My A1C: \_\_\_\_\_

#### ACR

The ACR (albumin/creatinine ratio) is a urine test done once a year to look for kidney damage.

Target ACR: **Less than 2.0 (males)**  
**Less than 2.8 (females)**      Date: \_\_\_\_\_      My ACR: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Canadian Diabetes Association. Visit [diabetes.ca](http://diabetes.ca) for more information.

### DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH AND WORLD DIABETES DAY

## Events help send key messages about prevention and management of diabetes

For the Canadian Diabetes Association, the month of November – including World Diabetes Day on November 14 – offers key opportunities to drive home messages the Association sends year-round concerning the importance of strategies to help prevent and manage diabetes.

Sharon Zeiler, the Association's senior manager, nutrition initiatives and strategies, says, "Very good research shows that people who are physically active, eat a healthy diet, don't smoke, lower their stress, and, if they are overweight, lose five to 10 per cent of their weight, can reduce

their incidence of type 2 diabetes by 58 per cent."

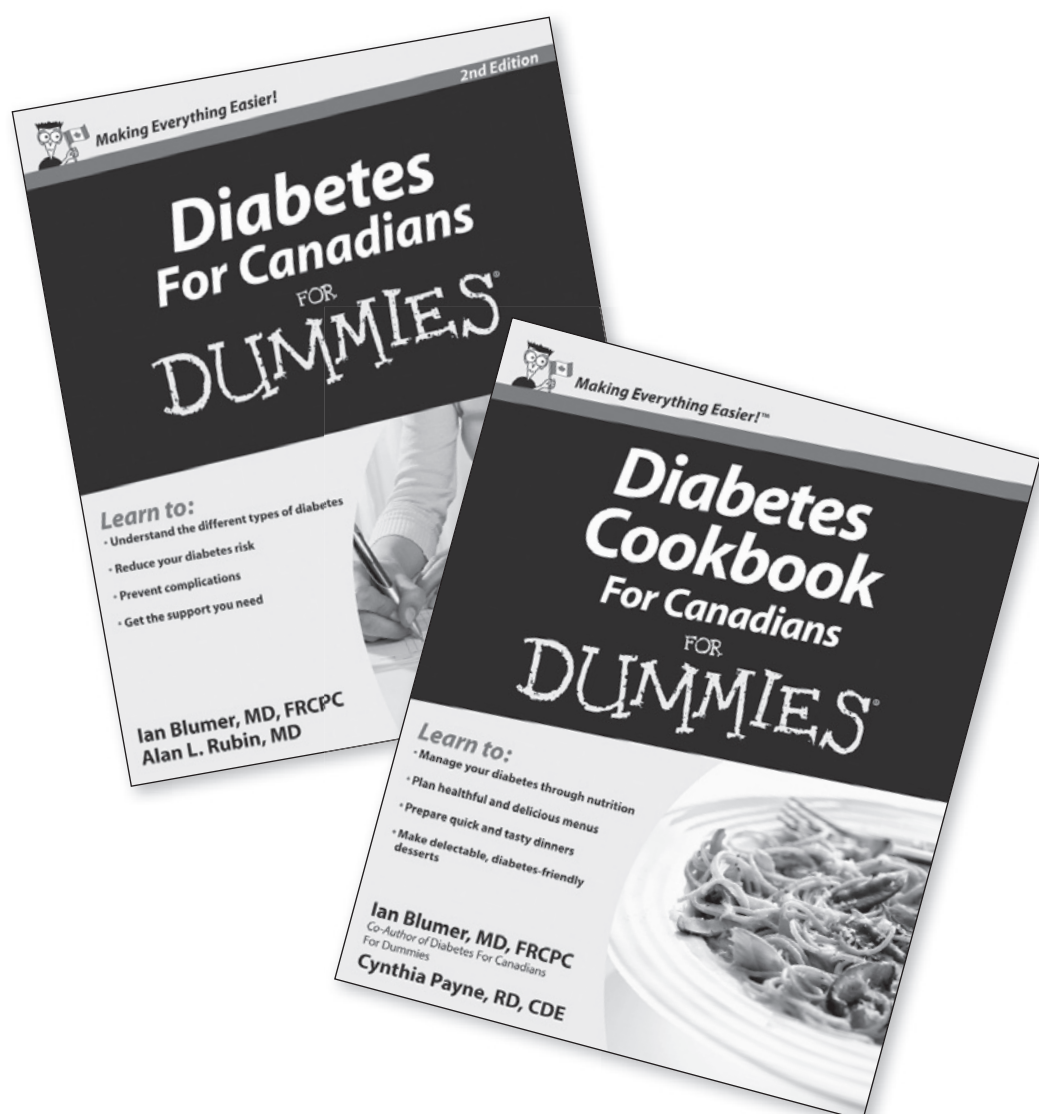
Ms. Zeiler cautions that while you can lower your chances, you can't necessarily eliminate diabetes altogether. "With the right action, however, if you're at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, you could significantly delay its onset or prevent it altogether."

Among the Association's Diabetes Awareness Month activities, the city of Toronto will see the CN Tower bathed in blue light on November 14, as a reminder of diabetes' enormous impact. As well, community events across the country will bring together dia-

betes experts who will share insight into the disease and the latest therapies and products that help people who live with the disease better manage its symptoms. The Association is also asking individuals to visit [diabetes.ca](http://diabetes.ca) this November to see the stories of incredible supporters – who are living healthy with diabetes, advocating for the cause and breaking ground towards a cure.

Ms. Zeiler says the bottom line is that the strategies the Association advocates are simply good advice. "Even if you're not at high risk, all of the measures that will help you prevent diabetes are good measures for all Canadians."

## Take Control of Your Diabetes!



Filled with expert advice, these essential Canadian resources explore the complex world of diabetes, bringing up-to-date information to your fingertips!

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