

Diabetes

NEW YORK STATE HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (NYSHIP) For Empire Plan enrollees and for their enrolled dependents and for COBRA enrollees with their Empire Plan benefits

What's Inside

- 2 Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP); Diabetes Management Program**
- 3 Risk Factors for Diabetes**
- 4 Types of Diabetes**
- 5 Your Prescription Drugs**
- 6 Help Manage Your Diabetes with a Simple Test; Resources**

This issue of *Reporting On* is for information purposes only. Please see your doctor for diagnosis and treatment. Read your *Empire Plan Certificate* and *Empire Plan Reports* for complete information about coverage.



If you or someone you love is diagnosed with diabetes, this report will help you better understand and manage the disease. Those of you who are at risk for diabetes will learn about lifestyle changes that will help delay or prevent the disease. And, you will learn how The Empire Plan's Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP) and Diabetes Management Program offer support and guidance for living with diabetes.

Understanding Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when your body cannot produce, convert or properly use glucose from food for energy. Glucose is a form of sugar made when the body digests food. Those with diabetes have excess glucose in the bloodstream which, left unchecked, can damage every system in the body.

Even though the disease is more manageable than ever, diabetes is increasing to epidemic proportions in the United States. According to the American Diabetes Association, 20.8 million people in the United States, or 7 percent of the population, have diabetes. While an estimated 14.6 million people have been diagnosed, 6.2 million, or nearly one-third, are unaware that they have the disease and are already suffering from its complications.

Symptoms of Diabetes

If you have any of these symptoms, contact your doctor:

- Frequent urination
- Extreme thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Sudden weight loss
- Unusual fatigue
- Blurry vision
- Tingling or burning sensation in the hands, fingers, feet or toes
- Frequent infections and poor wound healing
- Cuts or bruises that are slow to heal

The Empire Plan's Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP)

The Empire Plan's Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP) covers medically necessary diabetic supplies prescribed by your doctor.

Examples of diabetic supplies include a glucometer (a small, portable machine that you can use to check your glucose levels), test strips, portable lancets, alcohol swabs and syringes.

(continued on next page)



Home Care Advocacy Program (cont.)

If you have insulin-dependent diabetes, you are eligible for HCAP benefits for blood-testing supplies, including a glucometer. If you have non-insulin-dependent diabetes, you may be eligible for blood-testing supplies, including a glucometer.

Supplies not covered include tape, cotton balls and disposable containers.

Call the HCAP network providers directly at their toll-free numbers for authorization before receiving diabetic supplies, except insulin pumps and Medijectors. For most diabetic supplies, call The Empire Plan Diabetic Supplies Pharmacies at 1-888-306-7337. Tell the network provider that you are an Empire Plan enrollee and provide the prescribing doctor's name and

phone number. The supplier will confirm your need for diabetic supplies with your doctor.

For insulin pumps and Medijectors, you must call HCAP for authorization at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447).

If you do not call HCAP for precertification before receiving insulin pumps and Medijectors and/or if you use a non-network provider, you will pay a much higher share of the cost.

To be considered for benefits, you must be managing your diabetes under the direction of a doctor, for example through diet, exercise and/or medication.

For more information on HCAP, see your *NYSHIP General Information Book and Empire Plan Certificate and Reporting On HCAP*.



The Empire Plan Diabetes Management Program

The Empire Plan's Diabetes Management Program provides guidance for improving, managing and living with diabetes or high blood sugar. The program aims to prevent long-term complications such as kidney and circulatory disorders, nerve damage and blindness.

If you or your dependents have received treatment for diabetes or a diabetes-related problem, you may be invited to participate in this program. Depending on the severity of your condition, United HealthCare may telephone you or send a letter inviting you to participate in the program. Participation is voluntary, free of charge and confidential.

If you agree to participate in the program, you will receive informational material to help you understand your diabetes. If you are identified

as high risk, a diabetes nurse case manager will be assigned to answer your questions and help you better manage your diabetes. The nurse will also coordinate care with the doctor treating your diabetes, as well as any other health conditions that may exist. For example, The Empire Plan's Basic Medical Program provides for yearly eye exams by an ophthalmologist to follow or assess possible complications caused by diabetes.

To find out if you may be considered for the Diabetes Management Program, please call The Empire Plan NurseLine services toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447), and press 5 on the main menu to speak with a nurse.



Risk Factors for Diabetes

- **Overweight.**

The longer people are overweight and the more

overweight they are, the greater their risk for diabetes. Recent studies have shown that losing 5 to 7 percent of body weight can help reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes (see page 4, Types of Diabetes).

- **Blood pressure of 130/80 or higher.** Sixty to 70 percent of people with undiagnosed diabetes have high blood pressure. Normalizing blood pressure greatly reduces the risk of both stroke and heart attack by slowing the formation of arterial plaques in vessels everywhere in the body, especially the brain, heart, kidneys, eyes and legs.
- **High cholesterol or triglycerides.** More than 75 percent of people with diabetes have high cholesterol or triglycerides, which are components of fat found in the blood. This increases the risk of heart disease by up to four times that of the general population. People with diabetes can reduce their risk of heart and blood vessel disease by lowering cholesterol levels or triglycerides.
- **Parent or sibling with diabetes.** A significant number of children or siblings of people with type 2 diabetes eventually will develop the disease unless they take steps to prevent it.
- **Family background of African American, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino or Pacific Islander.** People in these ethnic groups are at two to three times the risk of developing diabetes compared with all other people.

- **History of gestational diabetes (see page 5) or giving birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds.** Up to two-thirds of women who develop diabetes during pregnancy may develop type 2 diabetes.

- **Sedentary lifestyle.** “Sedentary” means doing nothing more than the light physical activity of day-to-day life. People who exercise three to five times a week can reduce their risk of diabetes by up to 58 percent.

- **Prediabetes.** As many as 41 million Americans are on the brink of developing diabetes, a condition called impaired glucose tolerance (IGT), or more commonly known as prediabetes.

Prediabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not yet diabetic. People with this condition have only slightly elevated blood sugar levels. However, they have an extremely high chance of developing full-blown diabetes within 10 years. This also increases the risk for other serious complications of diabetes such as kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, limb amputations due to impaired circulation and blindness.

Recent research has shown that lifestyle changes, and in some cases medications as well, can slow or reverse the process of developing diabetes and even prevent diabetes entirely.

In the 2002 Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) study, the National Institutes of Health followed 3,234 people who had slightly elevated blood sugar levels that indicated prediabetes. Those who lost weight with a low-fat diet and exercise five days a week were 58 percent less likely to develop diabetes.



Risk Factors for Diabetes (cont.)

The same study found that treatment with an oral diabetes drug also reduces diabetes risk, though less dramatically, in people at high risk for type 2 diabetes.

The latest studies also show that prediabetes occurs earlier than originally thought and that high-risk individuals should be checked more often. Doctors are starting to recommend that people age 45 or older, especially those who are overweight, be screened for prediabetes.

If you are diagnosed with prediabetes, you can take simple steps to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Improving your diet, increasing your physical activity and taking care of yourself are among the best ways to stay healthy and possibly delay a diabetes diagnosis.

Source: The New England Journal of Medicine



Types of Diabetes

Types of Diabetes

The three main types of diabetes are:

- Type 1 diabetes
- Type 2 diabetes
- Gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy)

Of the 20.8 million people in the United States who have diabetes, 90 to 95 percent have type 2 diabetes and 5 to 10 percent have type 1 diabetes. About 4 percent of all pregnant women develop gestational diabetes.

Type 1 Diabetes

In people with type 1 diabetes, formerly called “juvenile-onset diabetes” or “insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus,” the body loses the ability to make insulin.

Insulin is a vital hormone made by the pancreas, a gland in the body near the stomach. It is needed to change glucose, the body’s primary energy source, into energy.

When insulin is not available, glucose stays in the bloodstream and cannot be used as energy. Left unchecked, excess glucose can damage the blood vessels that nourish the eyes, kidneys and bladder. To regulate their blood sugar levels and prevent this damage, people with type 1 diabetes need to take insulin every day.

Type 1 diabetes usually occurs in children or young adults under age 30, but can develop at any age for unknown reasons. Environmental factors such as viral infections, chemicals, stressful situations and others may also play a role, but the specific role of each of these factors still is not clear.

Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes. Formerly called “adult-onset diabetes” or “non-insulin-dependent diabetes,” in type 2 diabetes the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin. As with type 1 diabetes, glucose stays in the bloodstream and cannot be used as energy.



Types of Diabetes (cont.)

During this period, the pancreas works overtime to make more insulin to overcome the resistance. For a while, the extra insulin moves enough glucose into cells to keep glucose from building up too high in the blood. This can go on for months or years without obvious symptoms.

The pancreas eventually begins to tire. Insulin production levels off, and the body cannot keep up with the amount of glucose in the blood, triggering type 2 diabetes. The condition may not be diagnosed right away, however, because often there are no visible or obvious symptoms.

Some people with type 2 diabetes need to take insulin or pills to help the body use insulin better.

Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes occurs when a woman's body cannot produce the amount of insulin needed during pregnancy. There are usually no symptoms. Therefore, if you are pregnant, you should be tested for diabetes between the 24th and 28th week of pregnancy. Women already at risk for diabetes (see page 3) should be screened at their first prenatal appointment rather than waiting.

Most pregnant women need two to three times more insulin than when they are not pregnant. This happens because of hormonal changes that are normal in pregnancy.

After pregnancy, blood glucose levels usually return to normal. However, a woman who has had gestational diabetes is at risk for developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

Women who had gestational diabetes have an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the next 10 to 20 years if overweight after pregnancy. The risk is reduced if the mother maintains a reasonable weight after pregnancy.

Sometimes, gestational diabetes may really be the “unmasking” of type 2 diabetes that hasn't been diagnosed yet. If this is the case, diabetes will not go away after the pregnancy, and the blood glucose will become high if diabetes is not treated.

Source: International Diabetes Center

Your Prescription Drugs

A list of the most commonly prescribed generic and brand-name prescription drugs for diabetes is available on the New York State Department of Civil Service web site at www.cs.state.ny.us. Select Employees or Retirees and follow the links to your group-specific health benefits information.

The Empire Plan Preferred Drug List will help you determine if your prescription is for a generic or a preferred brand-name drug. However, this is not a complete list of all prescription drugs on the Preferred Drug List or covered under The Empire Plan. For specific questions about your prescriptions, please call The Empire Plan Prescription Drug Program toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447).

Help Manage Your Diabetes with a Simple Test

If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, ask your doctor about a Hemoglobin A1c test, which shows the average amount of sugar that has been in your blood over the last two to three months. In addition to monitoring your daily blood sugar levels at home, the A1c test can help determine if your treatment is working effectively. It also gives you and your doctor important information about how to manage your diet and exercise plan, as well as how to adjust dosages of insulin and other prescription drugs.

Through The Empire Plan Disease Management Program (see page 2), work with your doctor to lower your hemoglobin A1c level to less than 7 percent. The normal range for people who do not have diabetes is between 4 and 6 percent. This will significantly reduce your risk of diabetic complications, including serious eye and kidney disease, and most commonly heart attack and stroke.

Resources

Keep these telephone numbers and web site addresses handy for your reference and to order your prescribed services, equipment and supplies.

The Empire Plan Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP)

1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447)
Press or say 1 on the main menu for United HealthCare.
Then press or say 3 for HCAP.

The Empire Plan Diabetic Supplies Pharmacies

HCAP network supplier for diabetes supplies
1-888-306-7337

The Empire Plan NurseLine_{SM}

Health information and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447)
Press or say 5 on the main menu. Press 2 to reach the library, enter PIN 335, and then enter the four-digit topic code.

American Association of Diabetes Educators

1-800-338-3633
www.diabeteseducator.org

American Diabetes Association

1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
www.diabetes.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/diabetes

Children with Diabetes

www.childrenwithdiabetes.com

Health Information from FirstGov

www.healthfinder.gov

International Diabetes Center

1-888-825-6315
www.parknicollet.com/Diabetes/

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International

1-800-JDF-CURE (1-800-533-2873)
www.jdrf.org

National Diabetes Education Program

1-800-438-5383
www.ndep.nih.gov

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse

1-800-860-8747
www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

State of New York Department of Civil Service, Employee Benefits Division, Albany, New York 12239 • www.cs.state.ny.us

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