

Most people go through a denial phase when diagnosed with diabetes or even pre-diabetes. Who wants a chronic disease? There are many of them out there, but which ones can you control?

Diabetes is a progressive disease – it will get worse over time. However, we know from research and patient experience that we can slow that progression by controlling the blood sugar numbers as early as possible in the diagnosis.

Diabetes is diagnosed with a fasting blood sugar of 126 mg/dl or higher. If you have a family history of diabetes, do all you can with your lifestyle habits to avoid it or at least delay the onset.

This is why doctors will prescribe a glucose monitoring machine for home use. Fasting blood sugar of <110 mg/dl and 2 hour after-meal blood sugar of 140 mg/dl are good blood sugar values as far as controlling the diabetes.

If the patient doesn't check the blood sugars at home, and goes by how they feel (“I feel fine”), the blood sugars could be high. Our body can compensate for out of control blood sugars for a short time, but while they are above normal, damage to the internal lining of our blood vessels, heart tissue, and nerve endings is on-going.

Medications are prescribed early in the diagnosis because some of them can slow the progression of the diabetes. The medications should improve the blood sugar levels. Doing home blood glucose monitoring is the only way we have evidence whether or not the type or dose of medication the patient is taking is efficient. The blood sugars are not only affected by the foods eaten, but also by stress levels, sleep patterns, hydration level, pain and exercise. All these need to be taken into account when working with the patient with diabetes.

If a medication is too expensive or you have side effects, call your medical provider as soon as possible and let them know, so an alternative medication can be prescribed in its place. Don't wait for your next appointment in 3 months to let your doctor know there was a problem with the medication ordered.

Be in control of your diabetes: decrease the portions of food, eliminate foods and drinks with a lot of sugar. Find alternatives that have minimal or no carbohydrates such as sparkling flavored waters or iced tea. And schedule physical activity into every day – walk the dog, walk at the park or track, go to the gym, or use your home exercise equipment.

Making changes in your lifestyle habits, in addition to the medications will impact the blood sugar control.

