Ministry of Health, Wellness & Elderly Affairs

Communications on this subject should be addressed to:
Permanent Secretary

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November 12, 2021

Press Release

DIABETICS ENCOURAGED TO ACCESS CARE

Every year on November 14th, we observe World Diabetes Day. We observe days like this to remind persons of the importance of this disease. As we struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is particularly important to focus on Diabetes.

Did you know that evidence has shown that people with Diabetes and those who are obese have worse outcomes with COVID-19 infections? Did you also know that worldwide, every 5 seconds one person develops Diabetes, every 10 seconds one person dies from Diabetes and every 30 seconds someone loses a limb because of Diabetes?

The raised blood sugar levels which occur in Diabetes contribute significantly to blindness, kidney failure, heart attack and strokes as these high blood sugar levels cause damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, and the nerves.

Let us consider the good news: Diabetes can be treated, consequences avoided or delayed with medication and lifestyle changes, screening, and treatment for complications. This year's theme is "Access to Diabetes Care"

People with Diabetes require ongoing care and support to manage their conditions and avoid complications.

Let us talk a bit about Diabetes and what you can do, if you or your loved one is Diabetic or Pre-diabetic. If you have been diagnosed with Diabetes, find out as much as you can about the disease. While doing this, be careful about getting the right information. The wrong information can put your life in danger.

After diagnosis, come up with a plan. You will need support from your health care providers, family, and friends. This is a chronic disease, and it may be difficult to manage without a plan and support. We offer self-management programmes to help individuals with Diabetes manage their diseases better at home. This programme has been shown to give very good results. Do feel free to visit or call your nearest wellness center to get registered for this six-week programme which is offered to clients both virtually and face to face.

In St Lucia, drugs for Diabetes are free in the public pharmacies. In the wellness/health centres, nutritionists, persons who help you eat the right foods to manage your Diabetes, are available. Do ensure you and your loved ones make an appointment to see a nutritionist. Since persons with Diabetes may have problems with their feet, podiatrists are also available in the wellness centers. These health professionals teach you to care for your feet to prevent complications.

Because diabetes can significantly affect the eyes, screening for damage to the eyes is very important. Free screening for diabetic retinopathy is available in three of our major health centres. Namely, the Babonneau, Castries and Vieux Fort Wellness Centres.

It is important to always visit your health care provider and monitor your blood sugars using your glucometer at home. If you are on insulin, try as much as possible to have a glucose monitor which allows you to test at home! These measurements will help you be in control of your disease. Diabetics and their families should know what acceptable readings should look like. Be sure to ask your health care provider. All Diabetics should know when blood sugars are too high or too low.

With Diabetes, patient knowledge is power. If the diabetic knows which foods cause his/her blood sugar to rise, because he tests frequently at home, then he can avoid such foods and use foods which allow him/her to be better controlled.

Currently as policy makers we are working on programmes which will further improve the care which Diabetics receive, because your health matters!

As we observe World Diabetes Day, let us each do our part to improve Diabetes care for ourselves, loved ones and clients.

For more information please contact the Office of the Chief Medical Officer or the Epidemiology Unit, at 468-5309/468-5317 respectively