After Kidney Transplant

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is when there is too much sugar in your blood. The sugar from the food you eat and drink stays in your blood instead of going into your cells. The cells cannot use the energy from the food.

Sugar in the blood is also called glucose. We will use the word sugar in this handout.

What is insulin?

Insulin is a hormone that helps your body use the sugar in your blood to make energy. Without insulin, your body cannot use the food you eat. Insulin comes from the pancreas. The pancreas is an organ behind your stomach.

How did I get diabetes?

After a kidney transplant you need to take antirejection medications to help you keep your new kidney working. Sometimes, these medications increase blood sugar and cause diabetes. Some medications that may affect your blood sugars are prednisone, cyclosporine, sirolimus and tacrolimus.

When you have diabetes, you need to learn how to manage it so you can avoid complications.

You will need to learn to:

- test your blood sugar
- follow a healthy diet
- take medications and/or insulin

Your diabetes educator and dietitian will help and support you as you learn these new skills.
Can I stop taking the anti rejection medications?

No. You must take these medications in order to keep the transplanted kidney working in your body. If you stop taking these medications, your body will reject the transplanted kidney. Your doctor will tell you how much medication to take. This will be reviewed at each visit.

How do I know what my blood sugar is?

Your health care provider will tell you what your blood sugar levels should be. These are called target levels.

You will have blood tests done regularly. One of the blood tests will test your blood sugar. When your blood sugars go above target, a member of the health care team will call you.

You can test your blood sugar with a blood glucose meter and record the results in a logbook. The diabetes educator will teach you how to do this.

What should my blood sugars be?

• Before breakfast: 4 to 6 mmol/L
• Before lunch and supper: 5 to 8 mmol/L
• 2 hours after a meal: 5 to 10 mmol/L

What if my blood sugars are high?

Your goal is to keep your blood sugars within your target levels. When your blood sugars are higher than the target you can damage your kidney and other body organs.

High blood sugar is:
• fasting blood sugar over 7 mmol/L
• 2 hours after a meal over 10 mmol/L

It is important to control diabetes by living a healthy lifestyle. This includes eating healthy, remaining active and keeping a healthy weight.

You may also have to take pills or insulin to keep your blood sugar within your target level.
Will I have to take insulin?

If you need to take insulin, your nephrologist or diabetes educator will help and support you.

You may need to take insulin injections 1 to 4 times a day in order to keep your blood sugars in target.

Who will help me learn about diabetes, medication and insulin?

There are diabetes educators on your health care team. The diabetes educators are Registered Nurses certified in diabetes education with many years of experience in the program. The diabetes educators work with your doctors and other health care professionals to help you manage your diabetes.

You will meet the diabetes educators as part of your care. You will learn about diabetes, medications, insulin and how to manage your life with diabetes.

Who will help me learn about my diet?

Eating healthy is part of diabetes management. A dietitian will meet with you before you leave the hospital to review your eating habits and make suggestions for changes.

After you leave the hospital, you can ask to meet with a dietitian in the Outpatient Transplant Clinic any time you want advice about healthy eating.