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November 2009 - Diabetes

November 14 is World Diabetes Day. Diabetes is a growing chronic disease that develops when we can't regulate blood sugars. Our bodies aren't able to produce enough the hormone insulin, which is produced in the pancreas. In 2008, diabetics totalled more than two million Canadians and 24 million Americans, according to the World Health Organization. Another 57 million were estimated to be pre-diabetic.

The buzz words have been humming for the past decade: Type 1. Type 2. Even the odd "gestational" Type 3 reference penetrates the diagnosis dialogue, which strikes about 4% of pregnant women. Advanced diabetes can lead to heart disease, stroke and adult blindness. The Canadian Diabetes Association has also added impotence and nerve damage to the list.

Type 1 can't be prevented, but Type 2 has modifiable risk factors that can help lower risk factors. Prevention pillars cover a number of healthy lifestyle habits, which accent eating wisely and increasing physical activity.

Marlene Miller with Iyengar Yoga at the Mary Winspear Centre totes yoga as a preventative, supportive and curative practice. While Type 1 diabetes requires the use of insulin, Type 2, non-insulin dependent, is often caused and aggravated by unhealthy diet, lack of exercise and obesity. Miller stresses that Type 2 is preventable because we can modify our lifestyles.

Practicing yoga is key in learning how to quiet a busy mind and reduce stress. It is beneficial in every aspect of life for people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. The many specialized postures, or asanas, positively affect the mind, as well as glands in the body. Certain asanas increase proper functioning of specific organs and glands. When followed by relaxation, compression of these glands causes an increased volume of highly oxygenated blood to reach the cells, bringing nourishment to rejuvenate deteriorated cells. A bonus about integrating yoga into your healthy living style is that it's cost-effective and easy to implement. That cost benefit analysis alone is stress-free!

Chinese medicine treats diabetes according to the individual's unique pattern of symptoms. No two people with diabetes have identical symptoms, whether it is Type 1 or Type 2. Mikiala Christie, BA, R.TCM.P., a registered Acupuncturist & Chinese herbologist with the SIWC, says that Type 1 and 2 are often described as the "Wasting and Thirsting Syndromes."

In either type, she adds, the main organs to stimulate are the pancreas and the kidneys.

Christie recommends acupuncture or herbal therapy. Acupuncture regulates the endocrine system by helping to regulate blood sugar metabolism. It can also assist with any problems that arise from long-term diabetic sufferers such as peripheral neuropathy with numbness and pain of the extremities.

The valuable take-home information from these health-and-wellness experts is to make lifestyle and dietary modifications, as well as to eat low glycemic index foods, such as whole grains, fish, minerals and beans. Following these recommendations can help reduce the risk of Type 2 by more 50%.

That's a recipe that's easier to live with, isn't it?

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