



# FAMILY AND DIABETES

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There are currently around 425 million people around the world living with Diabetes<sup>1</sup>. In South Africa, statistics from 2017, reported that there were 1,826,100 adults living with diabetes<sup>2</sup>. Most of these diabetes cases are type 2 diabetes, which can be prevented through leading a healthy lifestyle. Although these statistics are extremely high, the actual number of people that diabetes affects around the world is massive. Each person living with diabetes has family or friends who are also influenced in some way by their loved one having diabetes.

Families play a key role in diabetes, not only from an emotional and supportive point of view but are significant in addressing the modifiable risk factors associated with diabetes prevention and its management. Therefore, it is of great importance that all family members are provided with the knowledge and resources to better understand diabetes and its management and help themselves as well as their families to live a healthy lifestyle.

## HOW CAN YOU AS A FAMILY MEMBER HELP THOSE AFFECTED BY DIABETES?

### Encourage a healthy lifestyle

Adopting a healthy lifestyle is critical for prevention and delaying diabetes onset as well as essential for disease management. If you want your family members to achieve this, it is important that you lead by example and put steps in place that embody a healthy lifestyle. Focus on promoting a family environment that encourages:

- **Healthy and balanced diet<sup>3</sup>** – Choosing a variety of foods from different food groups. Carbohydrates that are low GI, high fibre or whole grain as well as those from plant proteins. Focus on lean sources of protein such as fish and plant proteins while limiting the intake of fatty red and processed meats. Choose low fat sugar free dairy products. Include at least 5 fruits and vegetables daily, focusing on plenty of vegetables and limited fruit intake. Choose vegetable fats and reduce intake of commercially hydrogenated fats. Drink plenty of clean, safe water. Reduce intake of added sugars from food and beverages and if you drink alcohol, drink in moderation.
- **Exercise regularly<sup>3</sup>** -This is a great to do as a family. All people with type 2 diabetes should be encouraged to perform 150 minutes of aerobic exercise, at 50 to 70% of maximal heart rate, per week, as well as resistance training three times per week. Flexibility and balance training are recommended 2–3 times per week for older adults with diabetes.



- **Other** – Manage your stress in any way that works for you as well as ensuring that you get a good night's sleep.

### **Get educated**

If you or any of your family members have diabetes it is important that you educate yourself on what it is and how to manage it. By understanding diabetes, you can put yourself in a better position to offer appropriate support<sup>4</sup>.

### **Be aware of the signs, symptoms and risk factors associated with diabetes**

Did you know that of the 425 million people, 1 in 2 people don't even know they have diabetes<sup>1</sup>? Early detection is vital therefore education on the symptoms of diabetes is important so that treatment can be sought before too much damage is done. If you or a family member have a family history of diabetes or had diabetes while pregnant, are overweight, inactive, apple shaped or have cholesterol or heart problems, you have a higher risk for developing diabetes. Symptoms of diabetes include<sup>5</sup>:

- Excessive urination
- Excessive thirst
- Feeling hungry all the time
- Significant weight loss
- Lack of energy
- Blurred vision
- Dry itchy skin
- Recurring infections

### **Tell your family and friends about your diabetes**

Managing diabetes effectively requires daily treatment, regular monitoring, a healthy diet and lifestyle and ongoing education. This can cause emotional stress<sup>1</sup>. People who have been diagnosed with diabetes can sometimes go through stages of grief and with some of these stages being shared by other members of the family. By telling your family, best friend, a colleague or healthcare professional and sharing what you are struggling with, you share the emotional burden<sup>6</sup>. When people understand what you are going through, they can help you and give you advice.

### **Take an interest in your family member's diabetes**

Whether it be encouraging healthy lifestyle habits, providing motivation or ideas or allowing your partner time for managing their diabetes<sup>7</sup>. Being supportive will go a long way in helping to manage their diabetes and prevent other family members from developing it down the line. Offer support in a way that helps your loved one to feel in control and not down.



Now that you have a few tips, go on and show your loved ones you care by showing your support and help to ease the burden.

### WHERE DOES FUTURELIFE® FIT IN?

One of the reasons that FUTURELIFE® is so smart is that it is suitable for everyone! FUTURELIFE® has a range of products that are suitable for the whole family, children, the elderly and people living with diabetes included. Visit <http://futurelife.co.za/which-futurelife-products-can-i-use-if-i-have-diabetes/> to learn which products are suited to diabetes and rest assured that you have a product on hand that everyone in the family can enjoy.

### REFERENCES

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