CHRONIC COMPLICATIONS RELATED TO PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

**Question:** I feel good, but my glucose levels and HbA1C are high. Why do I need to control them better if I feel OK?

**Answer:** Keeping good control of your diabetes now keeps you healthy for years to come, and helps prevent the following, serious health complications:

*Eye damage:*

Damage to the back of the eye can occur. This can lead to blindness. Tight glucose control can reduce risk for eye damage by 76%.

*Kidney problems:*

Blood vessels that supply blood to the kidneys can become damaged. Tight glucose control can reduce risk for kidney damage by 50%.

*Legs and feet:*

Blood circulation and nerves of the legs and feet can be affected by high blood sugar levels, leading to pain, numbness and infection. If not cared for, this condition can worsen and lead to possible amputation. Tight glucose control can reduce risk for nerve damage by 60%.

*Heart disease:*

Heart disease is the #1 cause of death in the U.S. and is more common for those with diabetes; this risk is reduced by following a healthy diet.

*How to Prevent Complications:*

- Studies show that keeping glucose as close to the normal range as possible can reduce your risk for these complications. Ask your diabetes team what your glucose goals should be.
- Follow a healthy diet to help reduce blood cholesterol and blood pressure and lower your risk for heart disease.
- Exercise regularly to help lower risk for heart disease and keep your blood glucose levels at goal range.
- Lose weight if you are overweight to reduce your risk for heart disease and improve your body's ability to process blood sugar.
- Attend annual diabetes exams: this includes annual eye exams and foot exams.
- Have glucose levels, HbA1c, blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation and only if you are over 21 years old (no more than 1 daily for women and 2 daily for men). Avoid alcohol if you are pregnant.
- Never start smoking or stop smoking if you do smoke (smoking increases risk for heart disease, poor circulation and infection). This includes vaping and use of other forms of tobacco.