

Johns Hopkins Bayview

Health and Wellness News

Staying the Course

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Hot Topic

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Staying the C

Johns Hopkins Bayview professionals help patients mana

It's challenging for anyone to make a dramatic lifestyle change. But for people with diabetes, it's a necessity.

Many public health experts warn that the number of cases of diabetes has grown to epidemic proportions. More than 18 million Americans have the disease, with 800,000 new cases diagnosed each year. If left uncontrolled, diabetes can result in a number of serious health complications, including heart disease, stroke, neuropathy, kidney disease, amputation and blindness.

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone necessary to convert sugar, starches and other foods into the energy required for daily living. The two most common types of diabetes are type 1 and type 2. Type 1 affects between five to ten percent of the diabetic population. It results from the body's inability to produce insulin. Type 2 affects the vast majority of people with diabetes and is caused by a resistance to insulin that may be brought on by obesity or inactivity.

Anyone ages 45 or older should consider testing for diabetes. Several factors may increase the risk. You should talk with your doctor about earlier testing if:

- you have a parent, brother or sister with diabetes;
- your family background is African-American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander or Hispanic;

- you have had gestational diabetes or given birth to a baby who weighed more than nine pounds;
- you are overweight (BMI of 25 or higher);
- your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher;
- your HDL cholesterol is 35 or lower or your triglyceride level is 250 or higher; or
- you are inactive and exercise fewer than three times a week.

Once people are diagnosed with diabetes, they face a lifetime responsibility. But with proper management, they can lead vital, healthy lives.

Know the Diabetes Warning Signs

See a doctor immediately if you experience any of these symptoms of high blood sugar levels:

- blurred vision
- excessive thirst despite regular hydration
- unusual weight loss
- frequent urination
- unusually high levels of irritability
- excessive hunger

behavior changes. That's why we think of ourselves as partners with our patients. Working together, we can help ensure successful diabetes management and prevent complications."

The diabetes management service offers outpatient care that includes regular testing for blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure; management of related medical conditions; and patient education on nutrition, exercise and other lifestyle changes. Several times a year, community members can even take advantage of a free, six-week series of classes that covers a range of topics—from buying the best blood sugar monitor to developing an exercise program.

An inpatient diabetes management service also is offered for those who have been hospitalized with new diabetes or for other conditions in addition to their diabetes. A dedicated nurse practitioner ensures proper blood sugar monitor-

Annabelle Rodriguez, M.D.
*Endocrinologist and
director of the diabetes
management service*



ing, medication administration and patient education. "This helps the medical team minimize complications and keep the diabetes under control as patients receive their other treatments," Dr. Rodriguez explains. "Another feature that makes our program unique is that we have specialists in every area of diabetes management—from endocrinology, nutrition and podiatry to cardiology, ophthalmology and wound care—so patients can get the coordinated care they need all under one roof."

To schedule an outpatient appointment for diabetes management, call 410-550-4906. To register for the next free, six-week educational series, call 410-550-7728.



Course

ge the “highs and lows” of diabetes

Latest Treatments for Diabetic Neuropathy Get Patients Back on Their Feet

For many people with diabetes, diabetic neuropathy can make the simplest of activities—such as sleeping or walking—extremely uncomfortable. The condition, a peripheral nerve disorder caused by elevated blood sugar, is most often characterized by numbness, pain or tingling in the feet or legs. Approximately 60 to 70 percent of people with diabetes have some form of neuropathy. Risk rises with age and longer duration of diabetes.

Because diabetic neuropathy inhibits the ability to sense problems, it can lead to the development of ulcers, wounds and chronic infection in the feet (*see patient story on right*).

Some mild cases may go unnoticed for years, but more serious forms cause severe pain or other symptoms that interfere with daily activities. If left untreated, the condition can result in further nerve damage to other parts of the body, such as the eyes, digestive tract and sexual organs. It also is the cause of close to 100,000 amputations a year.

But there's good news. Johns Hopkins Bayview offers the latest diagnostic techniques and treatments for this potentially debilitating condition. The goal: to help patients get back on their feet and maintain quality of life. The first step is to bring blood glucose levels within the normal range to prevent further nerve damage. Early diagnosis also is critical.

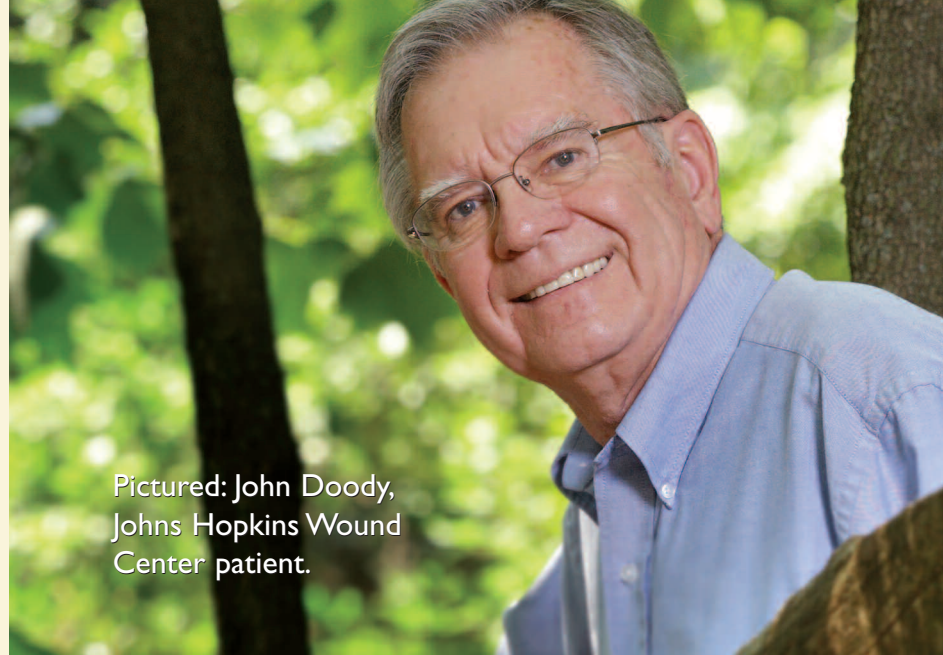
“We use a skin biopsy procedure to diagnose diabetic neuropathy at its earliest stages, giving patients the best chance for treatment and, sometimes, reversal of the condition,” says Michael Polydefkis, M.D., a neurologist and director of the EMG laboratory. “Our specialists also have great expertise in using the latest therapies to manage discomfort.”

In fact, there are several clinical trials available for cutting-edge treatment options, including new medications to control symptoms, spinal stimulators to alleviate pain and techniques to promote nerve growth.

For more information about treatment for diabetic neuropathy, call 410-502-2909.

Michael Polydefkis, M.D.
*Neurologist and the director
of the EMG laboratory*

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Pictured: John Doody,
Johns Hopkins Wound
Center patient.

New Hope for Healing Old Wounds

In the past year and a half, John Doody, a 66-year-old Arnold resident, has had 16 surgeries for complications of several medical conditions, including diabetes. One of his most troublesome complications was a non-healing wound on his foot, an all-too common problem for nearly one million people who have the disease.

While doctors were able to save Doody's leg, they eventually had to amputate two of his toes. Still, Doody remains optimistic about his ability to cope with future challenges—thanks to the care he continues to receive at the Johns Hopkins Wound Center, located on the Johns Hopkins Bayview campus.

At the Wound Center, 30 percent of patients have diabetic ulcers. Across the country, skin ulcers from all causes account for nearly one percent of the total U.S. health budget. The specially trained doctors and nurses in the Wound Center care for these patients by providing comprehensive medical services to diagnose the cause of ulcers, treat wounds and ensure proper follow-up care and support.

The Wound Center also participates in groundbreaking clinical trials, including a study that is examining a new gene therapy to heal diabetic ulcers in as little as 12 weeks. Researchers hope the treatment will speed the rate of healing and restore patients to normal activities.

The treatment involves a gene that stimulates tissue growth. Although John Doody was not part of the study, he hopes someday he will benefit from the outcome.

“I'm not ready to give up. Not yet,” he says. “The care I've received at Johns Hopkins Bayview has been excellent. The folks at the Medical Center are not just focused on healing your wounds—they are focused on the whole picture of your health. They realize that not one solution fits all—and they never give up, just like me!”

To schedule an evaluation at the Wound Center or to find out if you qualify for a clinical trial, call 410-550-4724.



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Seven Ways to Eat Smart

These eating tips can help people with diabetes properly manage their blood sugar levels throughout the day.

- Establish a balanced meal plan that includes all of the food groups.
- Eat three full meals a day, with snacks as needed.
- Monitor carbohydrate intake regularly using carb counting or exchanges.
- Watch your portion sizes to ensure that they are within your desired carbohydrate range.
- Check your blood sugar levels before and after eating.
- Avoid adding sugar or honey to foods. Use artificial sweeteners instead.
- Limit concentrated sweets, such as sugary beverages, candy and baked goods.



Dietitian Jennifer Eldred shows a patient how to use a glucose monitor.

Dialing for Diabetes

Diabetic Management Service
410-550-7728

Diabetic Neuropathy
treatment and testing
410-502-2909

Diabetic Neuropathy
clinical trial participation
443-287-0589

Wound Center
non-healing wound evaluation
410-550-4724

Diabetes Educational
Series Registration
410-550-7728

Diabetes Nutrition Counseling Offers Food for Thought

Along with exercise and medication, nutrition is one of the three best ways to control diabetes. But many patients are confused and even intimidated about following a “diabetic diet.” That’s where nutrition counseling comes in. At Johns Hopkins Bayview, a team of specially trained dietitians and health educators can help you cut through common misconceptions and develop a personalized meal plan to manage your disease and prevent complications.

“For people with diabetes, eating right is not as drastic of a change as they think it will be,” says Christine McKinney, a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator. “Patients come in to see us thinking they will never be able to

eat any of the foods they like. But they soon learn that all foods—including carbohydrates and splurging once in a while on their favorite treats—can fit into a healthy meal plan. We teach them how to monitor their blood sugar levels and find ways to eat the foods they enjoy within their blood sugar limits.”

Now is the time to eat right—for life! Diabetes education, which includes nutrition counseling, is covered under Medicare and most major health insurance plans. To schedule a consultation at Johns Hopkins Bayview, call Access Services at 410-550-7728 and request a diabetes education session.

—Kim Fabian