

Precautionary measures which diabetic patients need to take during the pandemic

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On the occasion of World Diabetes Day, it is important to remember that diabetics have a much weaker immune system which makes their bodies more vulnerable to infections and enable the coronavirus to cause harm. A report conducted by IndiaSpend highlights that around 73% of the COVID-19 deaths are linked with comorbidities including diabetes and over half of the 77 million diabetes patients do not know that they have diabetes ailment and therefore may not initiate measures to control it. Diabetes impairs the circulatory systems and makes it difficult for blood circulation all-around the body and slows down the pace of recovery from infections like Covid-19. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, diabetics may experience a severe form of the disease and even death. Therefore, in current scenario, it has become extremely important for the diabetic patients to adopt all the necessary precautions and prevent themselves from contracting the corona virus.

Things Diabetic patients should know about -

1. How Blood sugar and Covid-19 are linked?

Both diabetes type 1 or 2 are chronic diseases that produce high sugar levels in the blood (or blood glucose). In diabetes, the body may reduce insulin production which transforms body glucose into energy. Consequently, glucose builds up in the body and in severe cases, diabetics have to take insulin to reduce blood sugar levels. Regardless of the diabetes type then, the immune system gets compromised and the patient becomes more prone to coronavirus, which thrives in a context of elevated blood glucose. Elderly patients particularly are more susceptible to the effects of Covid-19 in a diabetes context. Studies have shown a strong link between controlled blood sugar and lower inflammatory markers, while high blood sugar can lead to severe complications or even cause death.

2. What are the effects of skipping medicine?

The effects of not controlling diabetes and skipping medicine may be severe. Research shows that this may make patients vulnerable to blindness and kidney damage which necessitates dialysis. It can also damage nerves which has serious consequences such as, numbness of the foot can develop when the foot falls asleep due to lack of circulation. This results in patients not knowing or noticing that they have hurt themselves, experienced injury, cut or burn. The foot then gets infected and if the infection spread cannot be stopped, the limb would have to be amputated to prevent the infection from spreading to other parts of the body. Avoiding medicine can also lead to serious forms of heart disease.

3. What are the precautions and tips for diabetics to keep safe?

There are many safety measures that diabetic can take to prevent complications of the disease:

- o Don't forget to wash hands before taking insulin shot
- o Hydrate yourself frequently and eat well to develop immunity against the coronavirus
- o Monitor blood glucose and blood pressure.
- o Check your weight often as losing weight despite eating normally could be a sign of high blood glucose
- o Don't stop insulin treatment even if you fall ill
- o Ensure you have enough stock of insulin in case it is not accessible
- o Check temperature for fever as it is a symptom of coronavirus
- o Keep in touch with your doctor to discuss issues like medicine dosage, insulin levels, blood sugar etc.
- o Have a plan ready for medication during quarantine
- o Ensure that you maintain sanitation and personal hygiene and disinfect your home regularly
- o If you live alone, have emergency contacts handy
- o Do not share your blood testing lancet or insulin needles with others.

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