

## A Crash Course in Diabetes for Men

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A recent survey of men with diabetes revealed an interesting tidbit of information: Men may not be as irresponsible and cavalier as they sometimes seem when it comes to their health—it's just that we need a little extra info to understand how to be healthy.

In the survey conducted by the American Diabetes Association, a mere 30 percent of men with diabetes who responded claimed to know "a lot" about their condition and only 25 percent reported eating nutritious meals. Ouch. Yet—and this is the important part—60 percent felt that more information could help them better manage the disease. And 65 percent said having more information would mean they would have useful conversations with caregivers about the condition.

The ADA has stepped up to the plate with some of that info. The organization has put together a website for men with diabetes and is working to get the word out about how to manage the condition and the health problems it causes. "[Men with diabetes] have to think about their physical health, their emotional health, and their sexual health," Richard Bergenstal, the vice president of Medicine and Science at the ADA, told me recently.

You can learn quite a bit in just a few minutes by clicking through the group's Men's Health Page. And if you're feeling a bit more ambitious, try this PDF guide that explains how to live well with the disease and doesn't take more than 10 minutes to breeze through. I figured I'd make things even easier and break this down into six simple facts every man with diabetes should most definitely know. Just six. All are powerful reasons to change your behavior:

- Diabetes will make you less of a man. Testosterone deficiency is common among men with diabetes. In addition, diabetes promotes erectile dysfunction by damaging the blood vessels and nerves that control erections. Typically, men with diabetes develop erectile dysfunction 10 to 15 years earlier than men without the condition.
- It might well blind you and snatch a limb as well. Diabetes, which damages the capillaries that nourish the retina, is the leading cause of new cases of blindness. And vascular damage often affects the feet; more than 60 percent of nontraumatic lower limb amputations occur in people with diabetes.
- It will probably mess with your mind. Studies show that people with diabetes have a greater risk of depression than people without the problem.
- There's a good chance it will kill you. Adults with diabetes have heart disease death rates two to four times as high as adults without diabetes.
- There are some ways to foil diabetes short of medication. Unlike many diseases, such as cancer or Alzheimer's, there's a lot that you can do to avoid the symptoms. The most important: Keep your blood glucose levels under control by eating and exercising right. Choose a varied diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat foods, and get at least 30 minutes of exercise five times a week.
- Monitoring yourself is key. Finally, make sure to see a doctor regularly for checks of your glucose and cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Many complications of diabetes are preventable.

<http://health.usnews.com/blogs/on-men/2008/10/06/a-crash-course-in-diabetes-for-men.html>