



Diabetes Life Lines

Keeping Safe from Infection

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that no one share

- finger stick devices
- blood glucose monitors
- insulin syringes
- insulin pens
- or insulin vials.

This is to prevent possible transmission of hepatitis B and other serious infections.

When your blood glucose is checked by someone else, be sure disposable gloves are worn that are changed between patients. The hands should be sanitized before new gloves are put on.

Be sure they use a disposable lancing device that is thrown away once your blood is taken. Then the monitor must be cleaned and disinfected between patients if it is not solely assigned to you.

Insulin syringes, vials and pens can be easily contaminated if shared. They are meant to be only used by one person. Insulin vials used at a hospital or clinic should only be entered with a new needle and new syringe each time a dose is drawn up.



If you see that these procedures are not being followed, refuse to have your blood checked or the insulin administered until these oversights are corrected.

Metformin and Vitamin B₁₂ Deficiency

Vitamin B₁₂ is an essential vitamin for the development of red blood cells. It also helps maintain the nervous system. Vitamin B₁₂ is found in meat, seafood, milk products, poultry and eggs. Some plant foods may have vitamin B₁₂ added to them such as “fortified” cereals.

Symptoms of vitamin B₁₂ deficiency include anemia, weakness, loss of balance, and numbness or tingling in the arms or legs.

For many years, researchers have noticed that taking metformin reduces vitamin B₁₂ absorption in patients. Short-term studies reported that metformin decreased vitamin B₁₂

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levels from 14 to 30%. A study published in 2010 looked at the effect of metformin on vitamin B₁₂ over four years. The authors found that longer treatment with metformin increased the risk of vitamin B₁₂ deficiency. They recommended that B₁₂ be measured regularly during long-term metformin therapy.

But monitoring of vitamin B₁₂ levels can increase the burden on metformin patients and add more costs. So until there is more support for routine vitamin B₁₂ testing, having it done once every two to three years seems to be enough.

Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency takes several years to develop so taking an annual vitamin B₁₂ shot of 1000 micrograms should meet vitamin B₁₂ needs. Also, B₁₂ absorption requires calcium. If you do not consume 1,000 to 1,200 milligrams of calcium per day, take a calcium supplement to help reverse the poor absorption of vitamin B₁₂.

So if you use metformin, discuss with your healthcare team how to avoid vitamin B₁₂ deficiency. Together you can then decide whether you should be tested.



No One Likes Hypoglycemia

People who take insulin or pills that cause the pancreas to make more insulin can get hypoglycemia. Hypoglycemia is the medical term for low blood glucose (sugar). It occurs when your blood glucose is less than 70 milligrams per deciliter. You may also feel low if you have a high blood glucose level that suddenly drops to a lower level, even if it is not below 70.

If you have low blood glucose, you may feel

- Sweaty
- Hungry
- Shaky
- Anxious
- Confused
- Moody
- Dizzy

Everyone has their own set of symptoms and you probably know yours. Tell your friends and family what your symptoms are, especially if they occur often. Then if for some reason you cannot treat yourself, someone else can help.

When it comes to treating low blood glucose, use the **“Rule of 15.”** That means consuming 15 grams of carbohydrate and then waiting 15 minutes. Check your blood glucose at the end of the 15 minutes. If it is still below 70, consume another 15 grams of carbohydrate. Repeat the Rule of 15 until your blood glucose is above 70.

You may feel so bad when you have low blood glucose that you consume too much carbohydrate. This will just make your blood glucose go high, and then you have another problem. Big swings in blood glucose over time may increase your risk for diabetic complications.



Good choices for treating your low blood glucose are:

- Glucose tablets or gels (check package for the amount equal to 15 grams of carbohydrate since it can vary)
- 5-6 pieces of Life Savers candy
- 4 ounces of juice
- 4 ounces of soft drink containing sugar

If you are unconscious or too confused with hypoglycemia, your friends or family should not treat you with food or drink. They can inject a substance called glucagon if they have been trained to do so or they should call 911.

A few people have “hypoglycemia unawareness.” This happens when you cannot sense a low blood glucose level until you are nearly unconscious or too confused to treat yourself.

If you experience hypoglycemia often, discuss it with your health care provider. You may need to

- adjust your diabetes medicine dose or how you take it
- change your eating habits
- be more careful about alcohol use
- eat more food when you exercise
- be checked for some other medical condition that lowers your blood glucose

You may need to see a certified diabetes educator and/or a dietitian to get a “tune up” for your diabetes self-care if these things may be the issue.



Protect yourself from hypoglycemia. Always carry fast-acting carbohydrate so you can treat the problem if it occurs.

Check your blood glucose before driving or using other big machinery and before and after exercise. Always wear a visible diabetes ID like a medical ID bracelet or necklace, so if you need help, someone will know you have diabetes and act quickly.

Strategies for Eating Away From Home

When you eat out, you can still control your food choices and portion sizes. No, it is not easy, but you can make it easier. Here are some strategies that work:

1. **Know what to order before you arrive.** Many chain restaurants post their menus and the nutrition content of their food on the internet. Look there first. If a menu



isn't available, call ahead to see what is served so you know what to order before you go.

2. Don't look at the menu again and order first.

If you look at the menu after you arrive or hear what others are ordering, you may be tempted to change your choice.

3. Ask for the food to be prepared "your way."

Many restaurants will prepare food to order. It never hurts to ask. For example, they may be willing to broil your fish instead of frying it. They may also leave off the sauce, dressing or gravy or put it on the side so you can decide how much to use. Some will also substitute steamed vegetables or a green salad with low calorie dressing for fries. Ask politely for what you want, but if it doesn't arrive as you ordered, ask the server nicely to correct the mistake.



4. Remove temptations from the table.

Have the salsa and chips or the bread basket removed when you sit down. If you know portions are large, either request

- a take home box to come with your meal so you can fill it with the extra amount before you start eating
- an extra plate so you can share with someone else
- your plate be removed as soon as you eat enough so you'll be less likely to finish the entire meal.

Contributors to this issue:

Connie Crawley, MS, RD, LD, Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist, Writer and Editor

Melody Sheffield, PharmD, UGA College of Pharmacy, Writer

Editorial Board:

Jenny Grimm, RN, MSN, CDE, Medical College of Georgia

Ian C. Herskowitz, MD, CDE, FACS, Medical College of Georgia



Recipe Corner

Delicious Greek Isles Salad

While this recipe looks higher in fat than some salads, it is mainly unsaturated fat that protects your heart. The fat may also help your body to absorb some of the nutrients from the vegetables.

1 head romaine lettuce, rinsed, dried and chopped
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
6 ounces kalamata olives, drained and chopped
1 yellow or green bell pepper, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
3 large plum tomatoes, chopped
1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 cup fat free feta cheese, crumbled
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 ½ teaspoons dried oregano
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
5 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1-2 packets sugar substitute (optional)

1. In a large bowl, combine all the vegetables.
2. Wisk together the feta cheese, olive oil, oregano, lemon juice, red wine vinegar and sugar substitute.
3. Right before serving, pour the dressing over the salad and toss well. Serve immediately.

6 Servings

Nutritional Analysis:

Calories: 173	Carbohydrate: 9 grams	Protein: 8 grams
Fat: 12 grams	Saturated Fat: 1.7 grams	Cholesterol: 2 milligrams
Sodium: 442 milligrams		Fiber: 3 grams

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The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

College of Agricultural and Environmental
Sciences / Athens, Georgia 30602-4356

Dear Friend,

Diabetes Life Lines is a bi-monthly publication sent to you by your local county Extension agent.

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If you would like to receive notification of newly published newsletters by e-mail, please send us your e-mail address to: extensionservice@gwinnettcountry.com or contact Tricia Smith at 678-377-4010.

Yours truly,

Ines Beltran

FACS Agent, Gwinnett County

Connie Crawley, Principal Writer

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J. Scott Angle, Dean and Director
Anne Sweaney, Interim Dean and Associate Director

Cooperative Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
The University of Georgia
College of Agricultural
And Environmental Sciences
Gwinnett Cooperative Extension
750 South Perry Street, Suite 400
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30046
