



## Clients with Diabetes

As an essential part of the diabetes care team, most Registered Dietitians will see clients with diabetes. Many dietitians work in specialized Diabetes Education Centres throughout Ontario.

There are three common types of diabetes:

- About 10% of people with diabetes have Type 1 and are usually diagnosed before the age of 30. They need insulin to compensate for the destruction of the pancreatic beta cells that product insulin;
- About 90% of people with diabetes have Type 2 and are often diagnosed after age 40. Their condition is often attributable to a family history of diabetes, overweight or obese state, insulin resistance and malfunction of the pancreatic cells that produce insulin;
- Gestational diabetes occurs in 2 - 4% of all pregnancies.

A dietitian's assessment includes assessment of usual eating habits, weight history, medical history, laboratory information, physical activity history, lifestyle, health beliefs, motivation to change behavior, psychosocial issues, economic and education level.

The key goals for nutrition care provided by a Registered Dietitian to a person with diabetes include:

- Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and optimal blood glucose and lipid levels through appropriate food choices;
- Self-management of diabetes through diet, lifestyle changes, blood glucose monitoring and appropriate medication adjustments;
- Preventing or delaying long-term complications such as kidney disease, heart disease, nerve damage and blindness.

Over a period of months to years, dietitians work with clients and their families to set goals, monitor, educate and motivate them. The education typically includes:

- Meal planning such as exchange lists, carbohydrate counting, consistent carbohydrates, standardized meal plans;
- Adjusting medication and food for lifestyle situations and activity;
- Avoiding high and low blood glucose;
- Managing on sick days;
- Monitoring blood glucose, interpreting the data and making changes accordingly;
- Weight management.

Often dietitians working in diabetes care have acquired advanced knowledge and skills through specialized certificate programs such as Certified Diabetes Educators (CDE) available through the Canadian Diabetes Educator Certification Board.