

# 9:00 to 5:00 - What are Employers Going to do About Diabetes?

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# Overview

- Diabetes 101
- Scope of the Diabetes Epidemic

By the end of this presentation, participants should be able to:

1. Name three ways employers can support employees with diabetes
2. State three workplace accommodations for people with diabetes
3. Evaluate the best way to assess safety risks in the workplace

# What is Diabetes?

- **Diabetes is a condition in which blood glucose or blood sugar levels are above normal**
- When people have diabetes, their bodies either do not make enough insulin
- They cannot use insulin well. Insulin helps our body to use sugar or glucose and keeps blood sugar at healthy levels.

Uncontrolled blood sugar can lead to a number of health problems such as heart disease, kidney failure, amputations

# Prevalence and Incidence

Over 29 million people with diabetes

Over 84 million with prediabetes

According to the American Diabetes Association,  
in the next 24 hours, 4,110 Americans will be diagnosed with diabetes.



# Symptoms

Uncontrolled diabetes or high blood sugar levels can lead to:

Fatigue

Excessive thirst and urination

Infections and slow healing of cuts and wounds

## Direct Impact of undiagnosed or poorly controlled diabetes in the workplace

- Impact on productivity (feeling fatigued, low energy)
- Increase days off/sick days
- Increase insurance costs

# Long term

Heart disease and strokes

Eye problems including blindness

Nerve damage and loss of limbs

Kidney failure

Gum disease leading to tooth loss



Trying to keep diabetes in control is like aiming at an ever moving target.



## Reasonable Accommodations for employees with diabetes

- Breaks to check blood glucose
- The ability to keep food close by (In case of low blood sugars)
- Go to the bathroom as needed
- A place to inject insulin (privately if desired)
- Work leave for treatments, recuperation or to take diabetes classes

## Reasonable Accommodations for employees with diabetes

An employee with diabetes may need accommodations or “changes” to their work environment to do their job effectively and safely

Federal and state laws require the provision of “reasonable accommodations” to help them perform the essential functions of the job.

The need for accommodations must be evaluated on an individual basis.

# Accommodations

Simple

Little or cost to the employer

Little or no disruption in the workplace

# Glucose Testing

Breaks to check blood sugars which should only take a few minutes

Some employees prefer to do it in a private place



# Administering Insulin

A private place to inject insulin

A place to store insulin

# Leave and Work Schedule

Flexible work schedule to accommodate medical appointments

May need to miss work due to a low or unusually high blood sugar

# Work environment

If the employee has neuropathy (numbness or pain in the feet), he or she may need to use a chair or stool to sit while working.

Accommodations to reduce excessive walking.





# Eyes

If the employee has diabetic retinopathy (vision problems), he or she may benefit from a large screen computer



# Rotating Shifts

Employee's schedule

Monday 5:00am – 2:00pm

Tuesday 3:00pm – 11:00am

Wednesday 9:00am – 7:00pm

Thursday ----- (Employee calls in sick from the ER– blood sugar 675 )

No rotating or swing shifts (if possible)

It's very difficult to control blood sugars if an employee is required to work rotating shifts.

# Medical Appointments

Routine Provider visits every three to six months or more frequently if needed.



# High risk jobs vs Low Risk Jobs

Policeman, firefighters, airline pilots, truck drivers

Office jobs, retail, food service

Employee's primary care physician or endocrinologist would be the best person to determine if the employee is a good fit for the job.

# Risk assessment

A single episode of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) should not disqualify a person from a position.

An episode of high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) is usually not an immediate threat.

## Famous People with diabetes

- Tom Hanks
  - Paula Deen
  - Halle Berry
  - Randy Jackson
  - Mike Huckabee
  - Delta Burke
  - Larry King
  - Drew Carey
- Thomas Edison  
Della Reese  
Jerry Mathers  
Patti Labelle  
Billie Jean King

## Anecdotal - Quotes from real employees with diabetes

I wish supervisors would take a diabetes class so they can understand what we go through trying to manage this disease.

When I call in to work, I wish they wouldn't think I'm trying to use diabetes as an excuse not to come to work.

I wish they would have healthier food around the office for the holidays. I get so tempted to eat sweets.

## Anecdotal - Quotes from real employees with diabetes

- It's stressful when we're required to move on our jobs - to a new location, manager or position.
- When my blood sugars are high, I can't concentrate or think straight.
- The best situation for anyone with diabetes is to have a knowledgeable, understanding manager!



# Accommodations are a Win– Win–Win Situation

A win for employees- a worksite where they can perform their duties safely and effectively.

A win for the employer –Healthy, successful and productive employees with minimal absenteeism.

A win for everyone – Reduced health care costs.

# Cost Calculator

To assess the true cost of diabetes to your company based on the number of employees you may contact the

American Diabetes Association

(602) 861 – 4731 ext. 7096

[adennis@diabetes.org](mailto:adennis@diabetes.org)

# Summary

- Employees managing diabetes can serve as productive members of the workforce.
- Minimal accommodations can help reduce absenteeism, cost and employee dissatisfaction.
- Each person must be evaluated as an individual for employment as well as accommodation needs.

The End

Thank You  
so much!

# References

- Diabetes Care: Volume 37, Supplement 1 January 2014
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: National Diabetes Fact Sheet: General Information and National Estimates
- American Diabetes Association [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)
- Personnel Today : Diabetes at Work:2015
- American Diabetes Association: Wellness Lives Here
  1. Educates and motivates people to adopt healthy habits
  2. To be more active to reduce the impact of obesity and Type 2 diabetes
  3. A Healthy Lunch tool kit