

UNDERSTANDING DIABETES MELLITUS

By Dr. Derek Conte

There are many types of diabetes. Diabetes mellitus (meaning 'honey goes through' the urine) is a progressive and debilitating disease. If untreated, diabetes mellitus increases susceptibility to infection, destruction of peripheral nerves, loss of blood supply, gangrene, loss of limbs, vascular disease, heart disease, kidney damage and blindness. This is quite a frightening list - and sad too, because diabetes can usually be controlled by medication or diet and exercise. There are two basic types of diabetes mellitus. In Type I, the body does not produce the hormone, insulin, necessary to deliver sugar to the cells of the body, causing a starvation state. Type I's need insulin injections and represent less than 10% of all cases. In Type II, the body's ability to produce insulin is reduced or insulin receptors on the cells are not functioning. In both cases, I & II, sugar builds up in the blood and overflows the kidneys' ability to filter it, producing the 'sweet urine' of diabetics.

The physiology of diabetes is understood via the pancreas, a crucial digestive organ which produces insulin in structures called the Islets of Langerhans which, after a meal, guide sugar molecules into the cells for energy production and stores the excess in the liver in the form of glycogen. The pancreas also produces an antagonistic hormone, glucagon, which releases this stored sugar for use when we are not eating. Neurologically, the pancreas is regulated by the vagus nerve, which signals the release of both insulin and glucagon. The celiac gan-

glion, through spinal nerve T-7, shuts off these hormones when we are stressed.

Type II is understood to be caused by lifestyle habits and can often be controlled by eating small amounts frequently, avoiding simple starchy foods (which are too quickly converted to sugar), losing weight and exercising for 150 minutes per week. National Public Radio recently reported that these few simple measures were sufficient to bring blood sugar levels entirely back to normal in twin brothers who were diagnosed with early stage diabetes II - without medication. This is very encouraging news but it is important to catch the problem early and take positive action before tissue damage is done.

A patient we'll call Lisa, treating in our office for an auto accident reported that her medical doctor had to cut her diabetes II medication, over a period of 3 weeks, from 6 pills a day to 3 a day and cut it again to 1 pill per day because of her negative reaction to the medication. Lisa said nothing in her life had changed except for the introduction of chiropractic care. Her blood sugar levels remained normal. This is not an isolated case. We have other anecdotal reports of blood sugar normalization in the presence of chiropractic care without the use of medication. In these cases, the patients typically present with misalignments consistent with the vagus nerve and the T-7 nerve that flows through the celiac ganglion.

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