

Script – Print – Diabetes and COVID-19

People with diabetes have enough to worry about when it comes to management of their disease. But a recent [study](#), published in the Endocrine Society's *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, found adults with diabetes also need to be extra careful of COVID-19 as they are more likely to be hospitalized and die if infected.

“Patients with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes are at greater risk for severe complications with any viral illness, especially COVID-19,” says Tanya Munger, a nurse practitioner for OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. “Those complications and risks are much greater if they have co-morbidity conditions such as heart disease, chronic kidney disease, and things of that nature, and if their diabetes is not well managed. Some of the complications we’re seeing with people who are hospitalized with COVID include diabetic ketoacidosis; sometimes they’re having severe hypoglycemia; some are going into acute renal failure, blood clots and even strokes.”

The study looked at data from 767 patients with COVID-19 and Type 1 diabetes from 56 diabetes clinics across the country. The study found patients older than 40 were seven times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 compared to younger patients. No patients in the study died in the 18 and younger group, but two died in the 19-40 group and three died in the over 40 age group. Age, however, is only one factor in a patient’s risk for complications.

“Some of the people who tend to have more complications from COVID are the people who have chronic health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, past history of stroke, people who are older in age, and people whose chronic health conditions aren’t well managed,” says Munger. “Obesity is another big predictor of morbidity and mortality of COVID as well.”

According to Munger, people who have a diagnosis of diabetes – whether it’s Type 1 or Type 2 – are not at a greater risk of contracting the virus; they have the same risk of contracting the virus as anyone else. The problem is, if they do contract it, they have a much higher risk of developing complications or even dying from the disease.

“People have less risk of complications if their diabetes is well managed, and if their blood glucose is in a healthy target range,” Munger adds. “But for the folks whose diabetes is not well managed and they have other co-morbid conditions or they are already experiencing other complications from their diabetes, those patients are more at risk for serious complications, even death.”

For people with diabetes who are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have to quarantine, Munger suggests keeping medication lists updated and staying in contact with medical providers. They should also have at least a 14-day supply of insulin, testing supplies and groceries in their home. Finally, keep a stock of concentrated carbohydrates on hand such as sugar, honey, hard candy and soda in case blood sugar starts to drop.

The bottom line, she says, is people with diabetes should take all precautions necessary to stay as healthy as possible.

“For our patients who have a diagnosis of type 1 or type 2 diabetes it is really important for them to continue handwashing, wearing their mask, social distancing," says Munger. "We want them monitoring their blood sugars the way their health care professional has recommended, making sure they're using their medications the way they're supposed to, and we still want them to follow up with their provider for their routine office visits. For our patients with diabetes we highly recommend they get vaccinated.”

For more information on diabetes care, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).