

Script – Print – Getting to the Heart of Diabetes

February is American Heart Month

Tanya Munger says the most important goal she has for the patients she treats for diabetes is to keep their hearts healthy at any cost.

“Heart disease is the number one cause of death in people with diabetes,” said Tanya Munger, nurse practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. “Patients with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have a heart attack. High blood sugar does a significant amount of damage to the blood vessels and the nerves that control the heart.”

People with diabetes are also more likely to have other conditions that increase the risk for heart disease, including high blood pressure, too much LDL cholesterol and high triglycerides. Because none of these conditions have symptoms, your doctor may order a blood test to check for tell-tale signs of heart disease.

Other factors that can raise your risk for heart disease include:

- Being overweight
- Lack of physical exercise
- Eating a diet high in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium
- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol

“We want them engaging in healthy habits at home, making sure they’re eating healthy, nutritious meals, watching their portion size, carbohydrate and fat content,” said Tanya Munger, nurse practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. “We want them to engage regularly in some of physical activity to help keep the blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol lower. We don’t want them smoking cigarettes, and really following their plan of care and taking medications on a regular basis and monitoring their blood sugars.”

According to Munger, management for high cholesterol in patients with diabetes is focused on managing blood glucose readings and using statin medication therapy.

In most patients with diabetes, doctors recommend that their fasting blood sugar (which means eight hours with nothing to eat) remains in what is considered the healthy range of 80 to 130 mg. If they’ve eaten, the blood sugar level should stay under 180 mg. High blood glucose can damage blood vessels.

Munger compares managing diabetes to a full-time job with no time off for weekends or holidays.

“It consumes every piece of your life,” said Tanya Munger, nurse practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. “Whatever you eat, your activity, when you’re sick, if you’re stressed, if you’re

excited about buying a house or going on a vacation all of those things can alter your blood glucose readings. We're asking patients to do a lot of things that aren't fun. Here poke your finger four times a day. Poke your belly a few times a day. Everything we ask them to do is really time consuming. And quite honestly not fun. But they do it because they want to be well."

The American Heart Association considers diabetes to be one of the seven major controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Munger says it's important for patients and doctors to be on the same page when it comes to fighting off heart disease.

"Nobody wants a heart attack or a stroke," said Tanya Munger, nurse practitioner, OSF HealthCare Endocrinology. "No provider wants their patient to have a heart attack or a stroke so that's a common goal, I think, we can all agree on and work on together."

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