



Self-Management Strategies for Asian Americans

Diabetes is a disease that must be managed carefully. By making important lifestyle choices and getting regular health care, Asian Americans with diabetes can lead healthy, independent, and active lives.

Get Regular Care

When a person learns that she has diabetes, she should ask her health care provider about disease complications and management strategies. It is important to find out what blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure levels she has and the ways that these levels affect her body. A person with diabetes also needs to know how to monitor her blood sugar levels at home, and take the appropriate measures if her levels are abnormally high or low. Sometimes, a doctor will prescribe medication to help control diabetes, and it is important that patients take the medication regularly and properly.

Eat Well

Another way to control diabetes is through healthy eating. Studies have shown that poor dietary practices in the United States are linked to many serious diseases, including cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.¹ The diets of Asian Americans reflect these practices,

including immigrant communities who have increased their intake of meat, sugars, and oils. These eating habits can make diabetes more difficult to treat.

Eating healthy means preparing foods with less oil and salt, and more vegetables and other high-fiber foods. Steaming and boiling are healthier cooking methods than deep-frying. Polyunsaturated oils and low-sodium seasonings should replace butter and lard.² Cutting down on sugary soft drinks and sweets can also help.

Keep Active

Regular physical activity is essential to a healthy life. However, studies show that 57% of Asian American/Pacific Islander men and 65% of women lead sedentary lives.³

By keeping active, people can lower their blood pressure and cholesterol levels, achieve healthy body weights, increase their bodies' sensitivity to insulin, and relieve stress. Physical activities that can be incorporated into a person's daily life include walking, jogging, dancing, gardening, martial arts, and stretching. Combined with good eating habits and regular medical care, physical activity can significantly reduce the burden of diabetes on Asian Americans.

Healthy Foods⁴

Tofu

Soybeans

Green, leafy vegetables, such as bok choy, mustard

Fish

Chicken without the

Lean meat in moderate portions

Fresh fruit

Low-fat or non-fat milk

Foods to Avoid

Deep-fried foods

Butter, lard, and heavy cream

Sugary snacks and sodas in large amounts

High-salt dishes

Red meat in large

¹ U.S. Surgeon General, *Surgeon General's Report on Nutrition and Health*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988.

² American Dietetic Association, American Diabetes Association, "Chinese American Food Practices, Customs, and Holidays," *Ethnic and Regional Food Practices: A Series*, 1998.

³ American Heart Association, "Asian/Pacific Islanders and Cardiovascular Diseases: Biostatistical Fact Sheet," 1999.

⁴ Adapted from American Dietetic Association, American Diabetes Association, 1998.