

1212 Weber Road
Farmington, MO 63640
www.mineralarearegional.com

Diabetes and the Link to Heart Attack and Stroke

But disease may be controlled with proper medical oversight and a healthier lifestyle

Farmington, MO – November may be designated as Diabetes Awareness Month, but most people already know a friend or family member, or several, afflicted with the disease. To many, diabetes is simply referred to as the “sugar disease” and it ends there. But that paints too simple a picture to be aware of other health ailments to which this complex “sugar disease” contributes.

According to Dr. Sequita Morris, Family Medicine Physician with Mineral Area Regional, diabetes not only plays havoc with many of the body’s organs, it significantly increases the chances of heart disease and stroke.

“People with diabetes are twice as likely as someone who does not have the disease to have a heart attack or stroke,” Dr. Morris said. “Some studies suggest that the chance of a diabetic having a heart attack is as high as someone without diabetes who has already had one heart attack.”

Simply put, diabetes is a disorder of the way the human body uses digested food for energy. Most food eaten is broken down into glucose, which is a form of sugar in the blood and the body’s main source of “fuel”. People who have diabetes do so because the pancreas, a large gland located behind the stomach, does not make enough of the hormone insulin to allow the glucose to enter the body’s cells, or the cells in the muscles, liver, and fat do not use insulin properly, or both. If that happens, the amount of glucose in the blood increases while cells are starved of energy.

Over time, high glucose levels can cause excessive deposits of fatty materials on the insides of blood vessel walls affecting blood flow. Naturally, the heart can be damaged by this condition leading to complications such heart disease. Similarly, blood vessels in the brain can also be damaged leading to an increased risk of stroke.

“The important thing to do is get regular checkups from your doctor and manage the insulin levels in the body to help reduce the damage diabetes causes,” Dr. Morris said. “Risk factors to look for include a family history of diabetes or heart disease, obesity, high cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, and smoking.”

For better health in addition to regular checkups, Dr. Morris recommended a diet of “heart healthy” foods, which include higher fiber intake, a reduction of saturated fat, and foods lower in cholesterol.

“Also, physical activity should be part of your daily routine,” Dr. Morris said. “Along with healthier eating, physical activity helps us reach and maintain a more ideal body weight.”

It also goes without saying that quitting smoking will greatly improve your health outlook, Dr. Morris said.

Under medical supervision of a doctor and a bit of self-discipline, diabetes can often be controlled through the use of medication, diet and lifestyle changes, meaning a longer life with quality. For more information about diabetes in relation to heart attack and stroke, visit www.diabetes.org.

About Mineral Area Regional Medical Center

Located in Farmington, MO, Mineral Area Regional Medical Center is a 135-bed, general acute care hospital, accredited by AOA, the American Osteopathic Association. With over 100 physicians on the medical staff, MARMC offers a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services, including 24-hour Emergency Services, Intensive Care, Medical/Surgical care, and OB/GYN. The hospital is one of the region's largest employers and tax-payers. For more information, visit the hospital's website at www.MineralAreaRegional.com