



Hello and welcome to the June edition of Nutrition Matters, a quarterly newsletter produced by Melbourne Dietetic Centre for Aged Care Facilities to support optimal nutrition practices.

The professional dietitians at Melbourne Dietetic Centre compile the dietetic insights offered in this newsletter. In this issue, we look at the nutritional management of diabetes in the elderly.

## Nutritional Management of Diabetes in the Elderly

Both the average life expectancy and the prevalence of diabetes are increasing, with 17.9% of Australians between 64-75 and 23% of those aged above 75 years diagnosed with diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Studies have demonstrated that some hospitals and aged care facilities are failing to provide appropriate nutritional management of elderly people with diabetes.<sup>2</sup> The following summarises the most current dietary recommendations for diabetes:

- Elderly people with diabetes have different dietary needs and goals to younger people with diabetes. Management of diabetes in younger people usually has a greater focus on reducing diabetes-related complications; however nutritional management of this age group is not a "one size fits all" situation. Older people with diabetes should be considered on an individual basis and their physical and mental status taken into account.

- Elderly people with diabetes should be periodically assessed, with a treatment plan tailored to suit their individual needs and lifestyles.<sup>4</sup>

- For some, tightly controlled blood glucose levels will not be a major health priority, as other health concerns such as prevention of acute illness and maintaining quality of life will be more important.

- Dietary restrictions are not necessary for elderly people in long term residential care, as specialised diabetic diets have not been shown to be more effective than normal diets in the management of diabetes in older people.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the limited food choices, and reduced taste or familiarity of the food caused by the dietary restrictions can increase their risk of becoming dehydrated or malnourished.<sup>6</sup>



- The diet of elderly people with diabetes should be based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines. These guidelines encourage the consumption a variety of nutritious foods, including ample high fibre carbohydrates and moderate amounts of healthy fats. Regular consumption of a well balanced diet has been shown improve blood glucose management, general wellbeing and assist with weight maintenance.<sup>5</sup>

- Elderly patients and residents of aged care facilities with diabetes should be provided with the standard menu instead of a separate diabetic menu, as long as the amount and timing of carbohydrates is regular and consistent.<sup>6</sup>

- There has been no evidence to support limiting added sugar or sugar concentrated food or drink items from the dietary

# Nutritional Management of Diabetes in the Elderly Cont...

intake of the elderly. A small amount of sugar in tea, coffee or cereal, jam on bread, and regular dessert and snack options are appropriate selections for this population group.<sup>6</sup>

An Accredited Practising Dietitian should be involved in assessing and developing personalised diabetes management plans for elderly patients and residents. All members of a care staff team should have a good understanding of the dietary requirements for diabetes in the elderly. A dietitian can assist in this type of staff education and training.

#### References:

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2. McCarty DJ, Zimmet P, Dalton A, Segal L, Welborn TA, The Rise and Rise of Diabetes in Australia, 1996 – A Review of Statistics, Trends and Costs, Diabetes Australia, Canberra, 1996.
3. Colagiuri S, Colagiuri R, Ward J, National Diabetes Strategy and Implementation Plan, Diabetes Australia, Canberra, 1998.

4. NHMRC - Australian Centre for Diabetes Strategies Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney. National Evidence Based Guidelines for the Management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. 2004

5. Diabetes Australia <http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/> - Living with Diabetes. 2009

6. American Diabetes Association. Evidence-Based Nutrition Principles and Recommendation for the Treatment and Prevention of Diabetes and Related Complications. *Diabetes Care*, Vol. 26, Sup 1.

7. Brand-Miller, J., Foster-Powell, K., Colagiuri, S. The New Glucose Revolution 3rd Edition. Hodder Headline Australia. 2002.



## Is your facility meeting Nutrition & Hydration requirements?

Recently Melbourne Dietetic Centre have reviewed and amended their comprehensive **Nutrition & Hydration Auditing** process. A **Nutrition & Hydration Audit** is designed to identify any gaps, highlight areas of excellence and recommend improvements in nutrition, hydration and swallowing. It is designed specifically to assist with facilities meeting aged care accreditation standards and identify areas for continuous improvement.

The **Nutrition & Hydration Audit** is undertaken by an Accredited Practising Dietitian, external to your facility (to reduce bias) who will review all systems relating to nutrition and hydration.

The audit includes investigation through:

- 1 hr interview with catering manager
- 1 hr interview with clinical manager and/ or Director of Nursing
- Documentation audit (resident files, kitchen documentation, and any other documents relating to nutrition, hydration and swallowing)
- Education needs assessment
- Policy and Procedure audit
- Meal time observation
- Discussion with resident / family

Findings from the audit are compiled into a comprehensive report and presented to your facility. Melbourne Dietetic Centre dietitians are experienced in aged care and have recently completed a project in consultation with the Mornington Peninsula GP Network to audit 25 residential aged care facilities on the Mornington Peninsula. Please call to discuss the specific needs of your facility.

# About MDC

Melbourne Dietetic Centre is the largest private practice of professional dietitians in Victoria. MDC has provided professional and accredited Dietetic Services to aged care facilities, hospitals, individuals, government, community and corporate groups since 1982, and are leaders in aged care nutrition.

Our team of 14 professional dietitians share a strong commitment to providing aged-care specialised services of an exceptionally high professional standard. Our commitment to customers is to ensure Best Current Practice for residents, and to provide leadership for continuous quality improvement.

## What MDC Can Provide For Your Facility

- Efficient regular or on-call clinical services
- Menu reviews and menu planning
- Staff education
- Nutrition and hydration auditing
- Locum or leave cover for your regular dietitians
- Nutrition screening for malnutrition risk
- Food service workshops
- Nutrition and hydration policy development
- Quality Assurance activities and reports
- Assistance for passing accreditation

## Nursing Homes in the News

**“Despite improvements in the rates of treatment and glycemic control, approximately half of elderly patients diagnosed with type 2 diabetes mellitus have hA1C levels of 7% or higher.”<sup>(1)</sup>**

Evidence is mounting that older people with diabetes have needs over and above those related to management of the metabolic disturbance (diabetes) and its complications <sup>(2)</sup>. A correlation is also being seen between high sugar levels and poorer brain function <sup>(3)</sup>.

Studies are now promoting a comprehensive geriatric assessment and tailored diabetes management plan<sup>(2)</sup> for elderly people with diabetes in addition to existing management by the GP and dietitian.

Melbourne Dietetic Centre can provide Accredited Practising Dietitians, experienced in aged care to assist in the nutritional management of diabetes in the elderly.

1. Suh, D., Kim, C., Choi, I., & Craig A. Plauschinat, C.A. (2008). Comorbid Conditions and Glycemic Control in Elderly Patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, 1988 to 1994 to 1999 to 2004 Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. Volume 56 Issue 3, Pages 484 – 492.
2. Sinclair, A.J., Conroy, S.P., & Bayer, A.J. (2008). Impact of Diabetes on Physical Function in Older People. DiabetesCare, Volume 31, Number 2.
3. News and Research: Out-of-Control Blood Sugar May Affect Memory 19 February 2009 cited by Diabetes Australia Victoria <http://www.diabetesvic.org.au/MediaCentre/NewsandResearch/tabid/238/Default.aspx> Accessed online 1 May 2009.

## Meet The Team

Denise is an Accredited Practising Dietitian, experienced in aged care and specialising in diabetes management. Denise has comprehensive education having completed a Bachelor of Nutrition & Dietetics at Monash University and a Graduate Certificate in Diabetes Education at Deakin University.

Denise practices in a range of settings within Melbourne Dietetic Centre including: individual consulting to aged care facilities, home visits for elderly, menu reviews, presents staff nutrition in-services and group education sessions and is a leading dietitian in the Nutrition & Hydration Auditing team.

Denise enjoys working with individuals and facilities to improve overall nutrition and hydration systems and individual outcomes.

When not working, Denise enjoys being active and getting outdoors, cooking and spending time with family and friends.



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Melbourne Dietetic Centre

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