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Signs and Symptoms
OF DIABETES

By Dr. Alande Brezault
*Internal Medicine Physician,
North Shore Medical Center*

Chances are you know someone who has diabetes. This metabolic disorder affects more than 23 million Americans, including approximately six million people who have the disease but have not been diagnosed. Diabetes is a chronic medical condition that occurs when excess glucose (sugar) builds up in the blood. It can cause numerous health problems if not properly managed. Some symptoms of diabetes may seem so insignificant or seemingly harmless that you may not



Dr. Alande Brezault

even notice them for months or perhaps years. But being diagnosed early is key to a Please turn to **DIABETES 19B**

Millions of Americans diagnosed with chronic disease

DIABETES

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lifetime of better health.

Symptoms of diabetes will vary to some extent depending on the type of diabetes you have. Pre-diabetes and gestational diabetes may not cause any symptoms. However, classic symptoms of type 1 and type 2 diabetes include excessive thirst and increased urination. This occurs because your kidneys have to work overtime to filter and absorb surplus sugar that has built up in the blood. When your kidneys can't keep up, this sugar is excreted into the urine along with fluids drawn from your tissues. A vicious cycle then begins, which prompts more frequent urination that leads to dehydration. This, in turn, is followed by

drinking more fluids to quench your thirst and urinate even more.

Other common signs of diabetes include fatigue, weight loss and blurred vision. Fatigue may be caused by increased urination resulting in dehydration and the body's inability to properly use sugar for energy. An unexplained weight loss can occur when calories and sugar are lost due to frequent urination. High levels of sugar can pull fluid from tissues, including the lenses in the eye, and affect the ability focus.

People with diabetes also may have slow-healing sores, tingling or numbness in the hands and feet, and tender gums. High sugar in the blood can impair the body's natural healing process and weaken its ability to fight infections.

Women may be especially prone to bladder and vaginal infections. Nerve damage caused by high sugar levels can make your hands and feet tingle, or you might experience burning pain in your arms, hands, legs and feet. Because of the body's decreased ability to fight germs, you may notice your gums pulling away from your teeth or sores developing in your gums.

If left untreated, long-term complications associated with diabetes include cardiovascular disease, such as heart attack, stroke and narrowing of the arteries. Other disabling and potentially life-threatening complications are skin problems such as bacterial infections, bone and joint problems including osteoporosis, and damage to the kidneys, eyes

and feet. Pregnant women who have gestational diabetes may experience preeclampsia (high blood pressure) and increase their baby's risk of excess growth, low blood sugar, respiratory distress syndrome, jaundice, and type 2 diabetes later in life.

Talk with your doctor if you notice any of these symptoms. Diabetes cannot be cured, but it can be successfully treated so you can live a healthy, active life. For more information about diagnosing diabetes, visit the American Diabetes Association website at www.diabetes.org.

For more information about North Shore Medical Center's Diabetes Center please call 305-694-4844 or for a physician referral please call 1-800-984-3434.