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Rush Generations

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Your Health

Understanding Diabetes: Why Prevention and Early Care Matter



Mario Sebastian Campana, MD
Endocrinologist

When people hear the word *diabetes*, they often think of it as a single disease. But that’s not really the case.

“Diabetes is not just one condition. It’s a group of metabolic disorders that affect how your body makes or uses insulin,” says **Mario Sebastian**

Campana, MD, an endocrinologist at Rush. “Over time, high blood sugar can damage blood vessels, nerves and organs.”

Insulin is the hormone that allows sugar from the food you eat to move from your bloodstream into your cells, where it’s used for energy. When that system doesn’t work properly, blood sugar rises. Left untreated, diabetes increases the risk of heart disease, kidney disease, vision loss and nerve damage.

Type 2 diabetes is by far the most common form, especially among older adults. It develops when the body becomes resistant to insulin. Eventually, the pancreas may no longer be able to produce enough insulin to keep blood sugar under control.

Before diabetes develops, many people have prediabetes. “Prediabetes is not diabetes,” Campana emphasizes. “But it does mean you have a higher risk

of developing diabetes, and this is the time when lifestyle changes can make the biggest difference.”

Some risk factors, like age, family history and ethnicity, can’t be changed — but others can. Excess weight, high blood pressure, inactivity, smoking and unhealthy eating patterns all increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

One risk factor might be surprising. “Even if you’re not overweight, physical inactivity by itself increases the risk of Type 2 diabetes,” Campana says. Making physical activity part of your routine can help reduce risk.

Diabetes often develops gradually, so symptoms can be easy to miss. Increased thirst, frequent urination, unusual hunger, blurred vision, headaches and slow-healing cuts or sores all deserve a conversation with your healthcare provider. Because many people have few or no symptoms, routine screening is just as important. A simple blood test can detect diabetes or prediabetes before complications develop.

Although diabetes is a lifelong condition, it can be managed successfully. Campana encourages patients to think beyond “going on a diet.” “When people hear the word diet, they think they won’t be able to enjoy food anymore,” he says. “Instead, think about a healthier way of eating that you can maintain.”

Regular physical activity is equally important. Experts recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week, along with strength training to preserve muscle mass. Campana is a particular advocate for resistance-band exercises because they’re inexpensive, easy to do at home and help build the muscle that naturally declines with age.

His most important message is that it’s never too early or too late to take action, and understanding diabetes is where it starts. “Education is one of the most important parts of treatment,” he says. “The more you understand diabetes, the better prepared you’ll be to manage it and prevent complications.”

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Join us on Oct. 7
for a conversation
about diabetes.
[See the calendar
insert for details.](#)

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Is It More Than the “Winter Blues”?



Joyce Corsica, PhD
Clinical Psychologist

As the seasons change and daylight begins to fade earlier, it’s common to notice shifts in your mood, energy or motivation. For many of us, these feelings are simply the start of “winter blues” — a temporary response to shorter days. But for others, the change in seasons can trigger a more serious condition called seasonal affective disorder, or SAD.

“SAD can be debilitating for some people,” says **Joyce Corsica, PhD**, a Rush clinical psychologist. “And if you’re experiencing it, it’s important to get help.”

Recognizing the difference

The winter blues may leave you feeling sluggish, less social or generally down, but they usually don’t interfere with daily life.

SAD, on the other hand, is a recurrent form of depression that often develops in the fall and continues through the winter. It can affect your mood, relationships, work and overall quality of life.

Why does it happen? One major reason is reduced exposure to natural sunlight. Less daylight can disrupt your body’s internal clock and affect hormones and brain chemicals that regulate mood, sleep and energy.

“All of these factors can have a direct effect on your mood,” Corsica says. “And if you’re having mood difficulties, other things can start to fall apart too.”

Know the warning signs

SAD is more than simply wishing winter would end. Symptoms may include:

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Losing interest in activities you normally enjoy
- Sleeping more than usual
- Feeling tired or lacking energy

- Eating more than usual, especially craving carbohydrates
- Difficulty concentrating
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Feeling hopeless

If these symptoms interfere with your daily activities or relationships, it’s time to talk with your primary care provider.

Steps to feeling better

The good news is that SAD is treatable. Depending on your symptoms, your healthcare provider may recommend light therapy, counseling, medication or a combination of treatments. Spending time outdoors during daylight hours can also help, even on cloudy days.

Healthy daily habits make a difference as well. Try to maintain a regular sleep schedule, eat balanced meals, stay physically active and make plans to spend time with friends and family throughout the winter months. Exercise, in particular, can improve mood by increasing the body’s natural “feel-good” chemicals.

Many people first seek medical care because they feel unusually tired or simply “not like themselves.” Your healthcare provider may recommend blood tests to rule out other conditions before determining whether SAD is the cause.

Join us on Dec. 16 for a discussion of holiday highs and lows. See the calendar insert for details.



Savor the Season

Holiday celebrations are full of choices, from what goes on your plate to how you care for yourself during a busy season. A few thoughtful decisions can help you feel your best while still enjoying favorite foods and family traditions.

Jessica Kass, MD, a Rush family medicine physician, recommends a balanced approach: When you look down at your plate, it should contain healthy portions of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, with some room for your favorite seasonal dishes.

For people with digestive concerns such as irritable bowel syndrome or acid reflux, a little planning can make holiday gatherings more enjoyable. Ask about ingredients, stick to foods you know agree with you and give yourself permission to pass on dishes that don’t.

“If meatballs are a trigger food for you, eat smaller portions or avoid them altogether,” Kass says. “Know your body and don’t overdo it.”

Simple habits can also help. Take a walk after a big meal, get enough sleep, manage holiday stress and eat mindfully. Feeling good makes it easier to savor everything the season has to offer and focus on what matters most to you.

Don't Tune Out Hearing Changes



Uzma Akhtar, PhD, AuD,
Audiologist

Hearing loss is about more than missing words. “Hearing loss doesn’t stop at communication difficulties,” says **Uzma Akhtar, PhD, AuD**, audiologist and assistant professor in the Department of Communication Disorders and Sciences at Rush University. “It affects social connectedness, and that can lead to loneliness, depression and anxiety.”

Research has also linked untreated hearing loss to a higher risk of falls, increased healthcare costs and cognitive decline. While hearing loss doesn’t directly cause dementia, it is considered one of the most important modifiable risk factors, making early detection and treatment especially important.

What causes hearing loss?

Not all hearing loss is permanent. Temporary problems such as earwax buildup, fluid behind the eardrum or certain illnesses may affect hearing and often can be treated.

Age-related hearing loss, however, is usually permanent. Over time, the delicate sensory cells and nerves inside the inner ear naturally wear down. Long-term exposure to loud noise, certain medications, smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease can also contribute.

Changes in the brain may also play a role. “As we age, changes can happen in the ear, but they can also happen in the brain,” Akhtar explains. “Because hearing is processed in the brain, changes in how the brain processes sound can also affect our ability to attend to speech and other important sounds.”

If you’ve found yourself asking people to repeat themselves, turning up the television or avoiding noisy restaurants because conversations are difficult to follow, you’re not alone. Age-related hearing loss affects more than half of adults over 60, and it becomes more common and severe with age.

Don’t ignore the signs

Many people assume hearing loss simply means sounds become quieter. In reality, words can also start to become less clear.

People frequently describe speech as sounding “mumbled” or “muffled,” especially in restaurants or other noisy environments. You may have trouble understanding higher-pitched voices, hear ringing in your ears or feel mentally exhausted after conversations because your brain is working harder to fill in missing sounds.

“If you notice a change in your hearing or have concerns, get it checked out,” Akhtar says. “The sooner we identify hearing loss, the sooner we can help.”

A comprehensive hearing evaluation includes reviewing your medical history, examining your ears and measuring how well you hear tones and understand speech. The results help determine both the type and severity of hearing loss, along with the most appropriate treatment.

Early treatment improves quality of life

Although there is currently no cure for age-related hearing loss, treatment can dramatically improve communication and help people stay engaged with family, friends and daily activities.

For some people, simple communication strategies (e.g., reducing background noise, facing the person who is speaking and asking others to speak clearly rather than loudly) can make conversations easier.



Depending on the degree of hearing loss, treatment may also include over-the-counter hearing aids, prescription hearing aids or, for severe hearing loss, cochlear implants.

Like other chronic health conditions, hearing loss is best managed early. “Outcomes are best when age-related hearing loss is detected and treated early,” Akhtar says. “Getting your hearing tested is a good first step.”

The **SCOPE Speech and Hearing Clinic** at Rush University provides free care to those who are eligible. To learn more or schedule an appointment, call (312) 563-4722 or email CDS_SCOPE@rush.edu.

Join us on Dec. 2 for a discussion of hearing health. See the calendar insert for details.

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(800) 757-0202



PLEASE NOTE: All physicians featured in this publication are on the medical staff of Rush. Some of the physicians are in private practice and, as independent practitioners, are not employees or agents of Rush. Rush is an academic health system comprising Rush University Medical Center, Rush Copley Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital.

4 Ways to Prevent Caregiver Burnout

Caring for a loved one can be one of life's most meaningful roles, but it can also be physically and emotionally exhausting. Taking care of yourself isn't selfish. It's an important part of being able to care for someone else.

- 1. Make your health a priority.** Many caregivers ignore their own medical appointments, skip exercise or don't get enough sleep. "You can't pour from an empty cup," says **Nece Pinkney, LSW**, a Rush social worker. Taking time to care for yourself helps you continue caring for others.
- 2. Accept help when it's offered.** Family members, friends and neighbors often want to help but don't know how. Be specific. Ask someone to prepare a meal, pick up groceries or stay with your loved one while you take a break.

- 3. Stay connected.** Caregiving can be isolating. Make time to talk with friends, attend a support group or simply enjoy an activity that helps you recharge. "You don't have to do this alone," Pinkney says. Reaching out for support can reduce stress and help prevent burnout.

- 4. Watch for signs of burnout.** Feeling constantly overwhelmed, irritable, exhausted or hopeless may be signs that you need additional support. If caregiving is affecting your physical or emotional health, talk with your healthcare provider or a social worker. Getting help early benefits both you and the person you care for.

**Join us on Nov. 4 for a "Caregiving 101" discussion.
See the calendar insert for details.**

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Fall 2026 Free Health and Aging Events

The following lectures will be held virtually. You can view them online or listen to them via phone. Lectures typically last about one hour. For updates on Rush Generations programs, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.



To join these lectures online:

Visit the Rush Generations YouTube page at the time of the event:
cutt.ly/RushGenYouTube.



To dial in via phone (audio only):

Call **(312) 626-6799** at the time of the event and enter **meeting ID 413 655 0125#**.

October

Understanding Diabetes

Wednesday, Oct. 7, 1 p.m.

Diabetes can lead to serious health complications if not properly managed. Rush providers will give an overview of the causes, risks and effective management of diabetes. You'll learn about screening, treatment options and strategies for maintaining healthy blood sugar levels and preventing long-term complications.

Pelvic Health

Wednesday, Oct. 21, 1 p.m.

Pelvic health plays an important role in overall well-being at every stage of life. Join Rush experts to hear about common pelvic floor concerns, including bladder and bowel health, pelvic pain and incontinence. We'll discuss prevention strategies, treatment options and simple lifestyle changes that can help improve comfort, function and quality of life.

November

Caregiving 101

Wednesday, Nov. 4, 1 p.m.

Are you a caregiver who's finding it a challenge to take care of yourself while you care for someone else? We'll share tips for focusing on your personal well-being so you're better able to care for your loved ones.

Medication Safety

Wednesday, Nov. 18, 1 p.m.

As we age, medications can affect our bodies differently. In this Schaalman Senior Voices lecture, Rush providers will discuss how to manage these changes safely, keep your medications organized and talk with your healthcare team.

December

Hearing Health

Wednesday, Dec. 2, 1 p.m.

Hearing loss is common as we age, but early detection and treatment can make a significant difference. Learn about how to protect your hearing, recognize signs of hearing loss and explore available treatment options.

Holiday Highs and Lows

Wednesday, Dec. 16, 1 p.m.

The holiday season can bring joy, connection and celebration, but it can also increase stress, loneliness and emotional challenges. We'll have a conversation about supporting your mental health and well-being during the holidays and throughout the year.

For updates from Rush Generations,
sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.

Workshops

This quarter's offerings are a mix of virtual and in-person events.

For all events, please call (800) 757-0202 to:

- Get a Zoom link for virtual meetings. You'll need internet access and the Zoom app on a computer, tablet or smartphone with a webcam.
- Join a self-guided version of a workshop with a weekly conference call check-in.
- Pre-register for in-person meetings.

Learning to Live Well With Chronic Pain (Zoom)

**Wednesdays, Oct. 14 to Nov. 18
1 to 3:30 p.m.**

This six-week workshop includes discussions and skill-building activities for day-to-day management of chronic pain, along with exercise and tips for approaching activity and rest.

zoom

Fit & Strong

**Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
Oct. 14 to Dec. 9
1 to 2:30 p.m.**

This program for people with limited leg mobility combines strength training, aerobic walking and education. You'll improve balance, mobility and lower body strength while reducing pain and anxiety.

**Johnston R. Bowman Health Center
710 S. Paulina St., Suite 438
Chicago, IL 60612**



Connect with Rush Generations at our partner City of Chicago senior centers

You can join a Rush Generations wellness program or meet with a Rush social worker, nurse, dietitian or pharmacist at these centers. For schedules, call Rush Generations at (800) 757-0202 or contact the center nearest you.

Austin

5071 W. Congress Parkway
(312) 743-1538

Central West

2102 W. Ogden Ave.
(312) 746-5300

Kelvyn Park

2715 N. Cicero Ave.
(312) 744-3799

Southeast

1767 E. 79th St.
(312) 747-0189

Southwest

6117 S. Kedzie Ave.
(312) 747-0440

West Town

1615 W. Chicago Ave.
(312) 743-1016

These centers and all City of Chicago senior centers also offer lunch, activities and community connection Monday through Friday.

**For more information, call the
City of Chicago senior services
helpline at (312) 744-4016,
Monday through Friday,
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**



Both Rush University Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Español (Spanish)

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Polski (Polish)

UWAGA: jeżeli mówisz po polsku, możesz skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Zadzwoń pod numer 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

繁體中文 (Chinese)

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한국어 (Korean)

주의: 한국어를 사용하시는 경우, 언어 지원 서비스를 무료로 이용하실 수 있습니다. 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)번으로 전화해 주십시오.

Tagalog

PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

العربية (Arabic)

ملاحظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية متاحة لك مجانًا. اتصل بالرقم 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Русский (Russian)

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните по телефону 1-312-563-2987 (телетайп: 1-312-563-2987).

ગુજરાતી (Gujarati)

સૂચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો નિ:શુલ્ક ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. ફોન કરો 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

اردو (Urdu)

خبردار: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ کو زبان کی مدد کی خدمات مفت میں دستیاب ہیں۔ کال کریں 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987)۔

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)

CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Italiano (Italian)

ATTENZIONE: In caso la lingua parlata sia l'italiano, sono disponibili servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti. Chiamare il numero 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

हिंदी (Hindi)

ध्यान दें: यदि आप हिंदी बोलते हैं तो आपके लिए मुफ्त में भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987) पर कॉल करें।

Français (French)

ATTENTION: Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le 1-312-563-2987 (ATS: 1-312-563-2987).

λληνικά (Greek)

ΠΡΟΣΟΧΗ: Αν μιλάτε ελληνικά, στη διάθεσή σας βρίσκονται υπηρεσίες γλωσσικής υποστήριξης, οι οποίες παρέχονται δωρεάν. Καλέστε 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Deutsch (German)

ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlos sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zur Verfügung. Rufnummer: 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).