



The Intriguing Link Between Diabetes and Alzheimer's



JAY GRECO, RPH

But first, a review. What exactly are diabetes and Alzheimer's?

Diabetes is a chronic disease where your body has high levels of sugar. That's true for one of two main reasons: Your body doesn't make enough of a hormone called insulin (type 1 diabetes). Or, your body doesn't respond well to insulin (type 2 diabetes). Diabetes can cause frequent urination, unusual thirst, and a wide range of other symptoms. It can cause serious – even fatal – complications. People with pre-diabetes also have high glucose levels. But they're not as high as with full-blown diabetes.

Alzheimer's is a common type of dementia that worsens over time. It causes memory loss, confusion, and many other changes. It eventually leads to death. Scientists have long debated about the changes in the brain that lead to Alzheimer's. But now they are paying closer attention to the role of insulin. Not only are people at increased risk for Alzheimer's if they have diabetes, but many people with Alzheimer's are also resistant to insulin.

Could low insulin or insulin resistance in the brain be the cause of Alzheimer's in some cases?



Lower insulin is linked with mental decline. By helping cells take up energy in the brain, insulin likely plays a key role in the growth and survival of nerve cells and memories. Researchers are now

experimenting with inhaled insulin as a treatment for Alzheimer's. It has improved memory in patients with early stages of Alzheimer's but it appears to have limitations.

So, rather than diabetes simply being a cause of brain changes, both diabetes and Alzheimer's may result from similar causes.

The idea that one disease can affect many organs is certainly not new. After all, atherosclerosis affects the kidneys, brain and heart. Now, we know that diabetes and Alzheimer's may be a part of the same disease process.

Before you become too discouraged about the threat of all these diseases, though,

remember this: Many of the factors that contribute to both Alzheimer's and diabetes (and atherosclerosis, for that matter) are within your control. Weight loss, exercise, stress management, and a healthy diet can help prevent or help keep diabetes in

check. And, it's possible these lifestyle changes could play an even bigger role with Alzheimer's than once thought.

For a wealth of information on these diseases, go to www.healthmart.com.

And, don't forget: If you need any guidance on diabetes management, I'm here to help. Or, be sure to ask me if you have questions about your loved one's Alzheimer's medications.



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Did you know that having diabetes before age 65 more than doubles your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease?

A study of nearly 14,000 Swedish twins helped to confirm this link. Given that more than 23 million Americans have diabetes and 57 million more have pre-diabetes, this is a bit of a concern. But the link between these two diseases may be stronger still. In fact, some now think of Alzheimer's as a form of diabetes. They call it type 3 diabetes.

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