Perfectionism: An Impossible Goal in Diabetes Management

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Goal Ranges

- Important to know goal ranges
- Maintain health and avoid complication
- Develop skills based on your body
- Even attentive self-care can result in out-of-range numbers
- Challenge to use your readings as information
  - Help you detect problems
  - Prevent complications

Numbers

- Powerful tools for managing diabetes
- Readings help you understand your body
- HBA1c test results below 7%
- Blood glucose level between 70 and 130 mg/dl before meals
- Blood glucose level lower than 180 mg/dl one to two hours after meals.
- Low end, the level at which hypoglycemia (low blood glucose) begins to be a risk
- High end, diabetes complications begin to be a risk

Perfectionism

- Numbers can be problem for anyone
- Perfectionist numbers can be very difficult
- Perfectionists view out-of-range numbers as a judgment of them personally
  - Indication of dire consequences to come
  - Proof that they are incapable of managing their diabetes
- These reactions make diabetes management difficult

Origins of Perfectionism

- Person with diabetes
- Pressures of well-meaning parent or spouse
- Patients doctor/health care team
- May be symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder

Origins of Perfectionism

- Pros
  - Can help individual to get healthy quickly
  - Manage life
- Cons
  - Cause undue stress
  - Affects their diabetes
  - Can cause number to go high
Origins of Perfectionism
• Comments about diabetes management can backfire
• Line between advice and criticism is fine
• Simple comment can be taken wrong

Origins of Perfectionism
• People who feel criticized or unsupported
• May rebel or give up on diabetes self-management
• Or try even harder and slipping into lying

Origins of Perfectionism
• Support of family members is critical to good management
• Family need to learn to communicate constructively
• Health care team can be helpful, especially for those with children with diabetes
• What is the most helpful thing that your family does for you?

Origins of Perfectionism
• Intensive blood glucose control came from results of Diabetes Control and Complications Trial (DCCT)
• Showed close to 7% A1c reduce the risk of developing:
  – Eye disease
  – Nerve and kidney disease
  – Heart disease

Origins of Perfectionism
• DCCT allowed people with diabetes to imagine a future free of devastating complications
• Diabetes is an imperfect disease with imperfect conditions
• Too rigid guidelines likely to cause frustrations and giving up in defeat
• Goals must be attainable to maintain motivation

Easing Up
• Perfectionist recognize thinking can cause serious drawbacks
• Feeling constant pressure to achieve can cause
  – Feelings of being overwhelmed
  – Low self-worth
  – Depression
• Must accept that perfectionism is not possible
Easing Up

• To feel less stress
• Talk with others with similar experiences
  – Feeling of high blood glucose readings
  – Experience of pricking finger
• Where do find support?
  – Online
  – Control Diabetes for Life
  – Support group
  – Exercise partner or group
  – Phone calls

Finding the Right Health Care Team

• Health Care Team can include:
  - Endocrinologist
  - Internist
  - Family practice doctor
  - General practitioner
  - Certified Diabetes Educator
  - Registered Dietician

• Right team can help maintaining energy and motivation
• Women need to feel invested in their treatment
• Patients need to feel empowered to talk with their diabetes care team
• Choose doctor that values partnering with patients

• Sometimes peer support is not enough
• Feeling depressed or having significant life problems
• Working with a licensed psychologist or social worker
• Professional can give you individual attention

• Diabetes management is a process rather than an outcome
• Perfectionists view management as an accomplishment or an endpoint
• Look at level of control as a point on a continuum
• Look at the big picture!
• Diabetes is a piece of the whole

• Look for communication style that fits you
• Need to understand explanations
• Is your doctor listening to you
• Do they show empathy?
Finding the Right Health Care Team

- Once you found your health care team
  - Go to appointment
  - Be prepared with questions
  - Speak honestly
  - Set goals with your health care team
  - Let them know how you would like to help

Keep Things in Perspective

- Set attainable, realistic behavioral goals
- Challenging for perfectionist who wants the perfect A1c
- Allow for slip ups and setbacks
  - Check blood glucose more frequently
  - Do not skip meals
  - Have glucose tablets available
  - Have a plan
- Remember a blood glucose is a check not a test

Keep Things in Perspective

- Do not let blood glucose reading determine your self-esteem
- Blood glucose results are important, but they are neither “good” or “bad”
- They are information
- People with diabetes are living longer with less complications
- Most do it by plugging, day after day, seeking out new resources as needed

Resources