



Clinical Digest

ONLINE EDITION

DIABETES

Unhealthy Habits Make Diabetes Harder to Handle

It seems almost axiomatic, but unhealthy habits tend to accumulate. According to a study at Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid, Spain, a cluster of unhealthy lifestyle behaviors may be a clue as to whether patients with diabetes are engaging in clinical preventive recommendations, such as regular blood pressure and lipid profile testing, and influenza vaccinations.

The cross-sectional study included 2,156 adults with diabetes from the 2006 Spanish National Health Survey. Participants were surveyed about their

lifestyle behaviors, such as smoking status, physical activity, alcohol consumption, and dieting. They also were questioned about their adherence to certain clinical preventive services, including routine blood pressure and blood lipid measurements, influenza vaccinations, and dental examinations.

The researchers found a positive dose-response relationship between the number of unhealthy behaviors—such as smoking, drinking, sedentary lifestyle, and high-fat diet—and non-adherence to preventive health care recommendations. When compared with individuals with none of those behaviors (346 patients), those with 3 or 4 unhealthy behavioral patterns (293 patients) were twice as likely to not have had a blood pressure

check-up within the last 6 months, a lipid profile in the previous year, or received a flu shot. No association was found for dental examination in the previous year.

Younger patients with diabetes had a lower uptake of preventive recommendations, which is worrying, the researchers say, given the greater lifetime risk of developing complications. They further note that “programs encouraging preventive care should emphasize the need for preventive care regardless of age, general health status, and severity of disease, countering possible perceptions that only seriously ill or old individuals need to receive those recommendations.” ●

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