DIABETES CONTROL MATTERS

WHAT IS HYPERGLYCEMIC HYPEROSMOLAR NON-KETOTIC SYNDROME?

Hyperglycemic hyperosmolar non-ketotic syndrome (HHNS) is a life-threatening complication of diabetes. When HHNS occurs, it occurs in a person who has Type 2 diabetes. HHNS is also sometimes called hyperosmolar coma, which means "coma due to too thick blood".

In HHNS the sugar level is almost always over 600 mg/dl and can actually reach 1,500 or 2,000 mg/dl. The blood sugar goes up so much that the blood is actually thicker, or hyperosmolar. As the blood sugar goes up, the person urinates frequently and becomes dehydrated. A vicious cycle is set up in which the blood sugar goes up, dehydration follows, and that increases the blood sugar still more.

Prevention of HHNS depends on catching it before it becomes severe. Taking even the simplest measures, such as calling your physician, increasing water intake and treating a rising blood sugar with insulin as directed by your physician, is usually enough to prevent a hospital admission.

Symptoms of HHNS

- Increased thirst & urination
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or stomach pain
- Changes in or difficulty breathing
- Blurred vision
- Dry mouth
- Fatigue
- Sleepiness
- Confusion

How Can You Prevent HHNS?

- ✓ Follow sick day guidelines.
- ✓ Never stop taking your usual insulin or oral medication doses.
- ✓ Test blood glucose every 2 – 4 hours.
- ✓ If you do not have a plan to take extra insulin, call your physician if you have 2 unexplained blood sugars of over 240 mg/dl in a row.
- ✓ It is very important to increase fluid intake – drink sugar-free, caffeine-free fluids such as water, diet soda, broth or tea.
- ✓ If persistent vomiting, inability to tolerate fluids by mouth, or persistent diarrhea with progressive weakness or confusion is present, call your doctor immediately.

How Is HHNS Treated?

HHNK is usually treated under medical supervision in the hospital. Treatment includes:

- ✓ Large amounts of fluids
- ✓ Insulin
- ✓ Usually an IV is started
- ✓ Careful monitoring
- ✓ Treatment of the cause