Diabetes management does not stop after diagnosis and drug prescription. Unlike most diseases, diabetes does not normalise only with medication. Diabetes management strongly depends on one’s attitude and behaviour. Knowledge is needed to understand and to change behaviour and attitude towards diabetes in order to minimise the risks of complications.

Knowledge of diabetes can be acquired in several ways such as talks, the Internet and workshops. The Diabetic Society of Singapore has been conducting workshops since May. These workshops help participants to make wise and informed decisions towards physical and emotional health. They also aim to dispel misconceptions and myths about diabetes.

Ms Helen Koh, who attended the Self-Care Workshop in Boon Keng Diabetes Education and Care Centre (DECC), previously thought that sweet foods were completely out of bounds because of her condition. Through the workshop, she discovered that she could, within limits. It was the portion and frequency which needed monitoring. She also learned that self-blood glucose monitoring also played a crucial role in her diabetes self-management.

Mr Soon, who attended the workshop in Sembawang Hong Kah DECC, feels he has a better understanding of the plethora of blood tests and the desired results. After the Self-Care Workshop, he is now able to reach his blood sugar level target and his HbA1C has improved from 7% to 6%!

Diabetes education is not the only key to empowerment for healthy management. Motivation is equally important. Without motivation, diabetes patients may lack the spirit to use the knowledge gained. During the workshop sessions, participants are also given opportunities to share their good and bad experiences openly.

A topic on ‘Quality of Life’ is also included in the last session. During this session, participants can express their frustrations and share their success stories in their diabetes control with fellow participants. A participant shared that he was forced to give up eating rice and ate only wholemeal bread as a replacement. He soon became frustrated with the lack of variety. The sessions cleared his misconceptions about his dietary habits and he has since realised that he is able to eat what he likes, in moderation of course, and still enjoy some variety again.

The Self-Care Workshop helps participants reflect on what they have learnt and aims to empower them to take charge of their condition. It also motivates them to use the knowledge gained to modify their lifestyle and change their attitude towards diabetes.