

Summer Edition (July – September 2012)

- An Editorial Note

The Wisconsin Tragedy

The Sikh Foundation of Virginia (SFV) stands in solidarity with fellow Sikh American Community, especially those living in the Oak Creek, Wisconsin area, after the horrific tragedy in Wisconsin on August 5, 2012. We were outraged and extremely saddened by the shooting at the Sikh Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) in Wisconsin that killed six people and injured three, including a police officer. Our thoughts and prayers have been with the victims and their families, and all law enforcement. The SFV appreciates the outpouring of support from fellow Americans of all faiths, and the presence of various religious and political leaders during the candle light vigil held on August 9, 2012. Every American should be treated with respect and dignity, and be safe in their place of worship. The SFV condemns terrorism, violence and hate crimes of any type.

- Surjeet S. Sidhu

MOVING FORWARD - TOGETHER

Ajaib Singh, SFV Chairman

It is with great humility that I thank SFV congregation for giving me this opportunity to be on the Board of Trustees and to serve as your chairman. ਆਪੇ ਸੇਵਾ ਲਾਇਅਨੁ ਆਪੇ ਬਖਸ ਕਰੇਇ ॥ With Waheguru's Blessings and the cooperation of Sadh Sangat, your Sevadars are already active on many important tasks that are in front of us and it is my earnest hope that together we will get these programs accomplished. We are blessed with a great team of Trustees and Coordinators who have already given a running start to several projects that will improve our facilities and services.

Kitchen Renovation: Safety and a dire need to upgrade and expand these facilities have been planned for some time. This project is on a hot burner (pun intended) this year. Our coordinator Amarjit Singh Riat has posted new plans in our Langar Hall for your comments, (if any) and is keeping this project on a fast track.

IT/Audio Visual: Improving the display of daily Vaak, Recording of Kirtans, regularly providing simultaneous translations of Shabads during Kirtans are the improvement Sangat is already enjoying as the coordinators, Beant Singh Deu Ji and Surinder Singh Ji continue to implement other changes. Our website is being updated for improved visuals—thanks to our IT team.

Youth and Education: Under the leadership of Surinder Singh Sachdeva Ji, this team has started several Youth-centered project, such as the “Movie night”, “Food Bank Services”, and Youth Camp to name a few.



SFV VOICE

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Sikh Foundation of Virginia

Effort here is to get our youth develop Sikh Spirit, leadership, Seva Bhav and by doing so get to know real meanings of Sikhi (*guru de Larh lagan*).

Kirtans: Sangat is already enjoying varied Jathas performing Kirtans on Thursdays and Sunday Diwans. Thanks to Parmjit Singh Ji Bedi, our Secretary, for his diligent efforts in this regards. I am sure he will update Sangat on his plans.

Gurbani Vichaar Group: A fairly active group from our Sangat has been meeting every second Sunday of the month since last December. Thanks to Dr. Barinder Kaur Ji Deu, occasionally facilitators from outside are brought in to help Sangat to understand Gurbani. Please join this group to better understand our Gurus' teachings. Please encourage the young members of our congregation to join this group.

Granthi Committee: Due to legal hurdles and questioning from immigration authorities, there has been some delays in getting a permanent Granthi and a permanent Jatha. Under Devinder Singh Behniwal as the coordinator, the efforts are being continued to find a suitable Granthi and Jatha.

Improving Gurdwara Attendance: Our efforts continue to improve attendance at our Diwans. I am sure Sangat has noticed some improvement already. We will continue to strive for further improvements by improving the quality of Kirtans and bringing Katha Vachaks and thanks to your Secretary, Paramjit Singh Bedi ji, we already have a great start and we plan to continue these efforts.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER: I am continuing with the motto of "Moving Forward Together" that was so wisely started last year by our then chairman, Beant Singh Deu Ji. It is still an apt motto today as it was last year. We all need Waheguru's *Kirpa* to forsake our *Haume* and pull together for the greater good of our Sangat. We need and our Sangat deserves that we achieve success in our objective of Moving Forward Together.

- Ajaib Singh

Public Relations Officer's Corner

- Kanwaljit K. Sachdeva



and plan this event for the community which is advertised via emails, announcements, website, and fliers. Picnic was a huge success and the weather favored us as well. Despite the rain prediction, it

Annual Picnic- 2012

Sikh Foundation of Virginia organized the annual picnic for the community on 14th July at Nottoway Park in Vienna. The SFV board members contribute



did not rain the whole day. About 175 community members attended the picnic and enjoyed the food and games. The morning started with poori-aloo and pickle, followed by the main course. There was a big



variety of food to cater for kids and old, for people with sweet tooth or savory taste. This was the first time that sno-cone machine was rented for the occasion. The sno-cones were enjoyed by everyone and it was a big hit.

Tug of war, Volleyball, Rope jumping, and Antakshri were played and enjoyed. Kids enjoyed swings, making sand castles, and playing a target game. In the end, there was lucky draw for the gift cards which was very exciting too. Gift cards were sponsored by two of the board members.

Overall, the day was fun for young and old alike. It was great to see people relaxing, reconnecting, and recharging. SFV Board of Trustees wishes to thank the community for coming in large numbers and making the picnic a grand success.

Punjabi Kavi Darbar

Sikh Foundation of Virginia organized the first ever Punjabi Kavi Darbar on 25th August. Punjabi language has rich heritage and the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh is famous for his love of poetry. The purpose of the gathering was to showcase our local talent. The event was a great success as 12 poets participated and presented their new creations. The poems ranged from religious to cultural to satirical and simply funny.



The audience was very appreciative of different topics. We heard about the ten gurus, khalsa panth, what is true religion, importance of guru's bani, voting issues, treatment of elders, and many more. It was indeed very entertaining and enjoyable evening. It was encouraging to see good participation by poets and audience and Sikh Foundation of Virginia thanks everyone for coming.

Attention Volunteers!!!

We are pleased to announce Sikh Foundation of Virginia's participation in the **PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD** program as a Certifying Organization.

This AWARD is a Presidential honor that recognizes the valuable contributions of volunteers nationwide through their current volunteer activities or lifetime service. As a Certifying Organization, we will identify eligible recipients, verify their service hours, and distribute the AWARD to outstanding volunteers.

Given your ongoing service activities, many of you may already meet the eligibility requirements to receive the AWARD. To qualify, volunteers simply submit a record of their service hours to **SFV** and we verify the service and distribute the AWARD. The award looks great on your resume too.

For those volunteers who haven't accumulated enough hours of service to be eligible for the AWARD, I encourage you to contact us to sign up for additional volunteer projects available through our organization.

The service hours can be accumulated through work on a variety of projects throughout the year. The only requirement is that the hours be completed within 12 months; recipients can qualify for a new AWARD each year.

If you have questions, please email at pro.sfv@gmail.com

<p>To be eligible to receive the PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD, Applicants' service hours must be confirmed by a registered Certifying Organization. There are three levels of the AWARD varying by hours of service completed within a 12-month period:</p>	
<p>Kids - 14 and younger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bronze Award 50 - 74 hours • Silver Award 75 - 99 hours • Gold Award 100 or more hours 	<p>Adults - Ages 26 and up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronze Award 100 - 249 hours Silver Award 250 - 499 hours Gold Award 500 or more hours
<p>Young Adults - Ages 15 - 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bronze Award 100-174 hours • Silver Award 175 - 249 hours • Gold Award 250 or more hours 	<p>Families and Groups (two or more people)*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronze Award 200 - 499 hours Silver Award 500 - 999 hours Gold Award 1,000 or more hours <p>*Each member contributing at least 25 hours towards the total</p>
<p>PRESIDENT'S CALL TO SERVICE AWARD</p> <p>Individuals who have completed 4,000 or more volunteer service hours over the course of their lifetime are eligible to receive the PRESIDENT'S CALL TO SERVICE AWARD.</p>	

For more details, check out the website: www.PresidentialServiceAwards.gov

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Secretary's Corner

- **Paramjit Singh Bedi**

At the first 2012-2013 SFV BOT meeting, the Chairman and most of the members expressed that we should invite good Ragi Jathas and Katha vachaks to better serve our sangat. From day one I wanted to fulfill the need of our sadh sangat and I contacted all available Ragi Jathas and Katha vachaks who are in the area. With the blessing of Guru, I am able to bring top level Katha vachaks like Dr. Amrik Singh Ji, Bhai Baldev Singh ji and also well known Ragi Jatha of Dr Gurnam Singh ji of Punjabi University, Bhai Ajit Singh Manjit Singh (Hazoori Ragi Bangla Sahib), Bhai Baljit Singh (Michigan), Bhai Lokinder Singh, Sardarni Sarabjit Kaur (Delhi) and Bhai Narain Singh Ji (Grand son of Sant Sujan Singh ji) Bhai Manjeet Singh ji Glasgow UK and Bhai Bhupinder Singh ji Rangila. If I continue getting support from the Board and Sangat, I will continue bringing good parcharak who can explain gurbani to SFV Sangat. Youth participation in the diwans is on the rise and In future I would like to see more youth come forward. I will also try to get Religious Speakers for the benefit of our youth as well other Sangat members

Construction Activities

- **Coordinator:** Amarjit Singh Riat

- The SFV Board of Trustees has approved the remodeling of the kitchen. The Board has hired an Architect for the design of the project. A preliminary drawing of the layout for the project has been prepared and is displayed in the Kitchen Hall for review and comments.
- Working with the Architect on cost proposal for the preparation of detailed construction documents.
- It is anticipated that the detailed drawings will be submitted to the County of Fairfax for permit during the fourth quarter of 2012.
- Construction work is expected to begin during March 2013 and should be completed in 120 calendar days.

We are requesting the Sangat to please submit any suggestion/questions to the Construction Coordinator in writing. We will need full support and blessings of the Sangat to complete this complex project.

IT/Audio-Visual Committee

Coordinator: Beant Singh Deu **Co-Coordinator:** Surinder Pal Singh Sachdeva

Members: Narinder Singh, Chetanpal Singh, Kuldeep Kaur Sidhu, Manjeet Kaur Sandhu, Upkar Kaur Bhatti, Harkirat Singh Sembi, Manpreet Singh Behniwal

OBJECTIVES:

1. To streamline the projection of shabads on regular basis for the benefit of sangat in general and youth in particular.
2. Display daily Hukamnama (Order of the day) on the TV monitor located in the lobby.

3. Explore the possibility of “Ticker” for flashing particular messages for sangat such as “Happy Vaisakhi,” today’s Kirtan program, visiting ragi jatha/katha vachak, etc.
4. Effective use of SFV website: www.sfova.org .
5. Audio recording of shabads recited during kirtan diwan.

PARTICIPATION:

Sangat is urged to help accomplish the above objectives, especially if your computer or language skills can enhance the quality of these programs. Youth is requested to spend some time to share their ideas to improve upon the existing systems. *Together we move forward the SFV.*

Youth & Education Committee

Coordinator – Surinderpal Singh Sachdeva

For centuries, a *Gurdwara Sahib* has served many purposes for the Sikhs but primarily as a place of worship where Sikhs could gather in congregation and recite *Gurbani*. If we look at some of the historical *Gurdwara Sahibs*, these institutions have centered their focus on reciting a set of *Banis* and singing a routine of *Shabads*.

If we look at local *Gurdwara Sahibs* located in villages and small towns, these places have also played a role in keeping the community together. The bonding which is seen in these *Gurdwara Sahibs* eventually lead to better neighborhoods and even stronger business communities at some places. Another common factor seen is a group of ladies organizing an afternoon program or a weekend program to recite *Sukhmani Sahib* and recite some *Shabads*, which eventually help at home when they start doing their chores at home while reciting *Gurbani*. Some of the local *Gurdwara Sahibs* have taken initiatives in turban tying competitions and *Gurbani* reciting contests for children.

Then come our modern age *Gurdwara Sahibs* located in world famous neighborhoods from Sydney/Melbourne to Silicon Valley and everywhere in between. Some places have been more successful than others in maintaining the course described above. Some have grown up to large number of congregations that they need multiple halls to run the day-to-day programs and some are still coming out of condos and townhouses. There are varieties of “venues” offered at these places, which range from once a week *Divan* to very active political role to focus on one style of *Keertan* and to involving youth through cultural programs, etc. Many of these places are running Punjabi Schools to keep kids aligned with their language, culture and religion. While all of their efforts are cherished, there are always some flaws and

some challenges to overcome. One thing is quite common in all these places, the local politics. Having some financially strong, highly educated good professionals on your side is not a bad thing, but often it ends up with whose head is bigger than others.

After being involved with an effective and independent Punjabi school, an independently-run *Gurmat* Camp and also being part of Youth and Education activities at the local *Gurdwara Sahib*, our team has collected several ideas that have been a proven success with children and youth.

From the beginning of this year, we have applied several of them at the Sikh Foundation of Virginia and the results are being accepted very well. These ideas include:

1. **Movie Nights featuring animated Sikh history learning movies**
2. **Chhabeel Seva Contest**
3. **History Workshops/Slideshows**
4. **3 day Sikh Youth Gurmat Camp featuring Keertan classes, Gatka, speech competitions, workshops, debates, open discussions and school bullying issues**
5. **Participation at the Capital Food Bank volunteer program**
6. **Sikh history jeopardy**

Treasurer's Report

- Jasbir Singh Sandhu

Monthly Report 2012

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Income	\$26,731.62	\$16,656.93	\$14,487.98	\$13,460.21	\$10,612.00	\$10,820.75	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$92,769.49
Expenses	\$21,189.99	\$9,492.60	\$15,061.30	\$6,524.50	\$5,608.24	\$16,480.46	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$74,357.09
Net	\$5,541.63	\$7,164.33	(\$573.32)	\$6,935.71	\$5,003.76	(\$5,659.71)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$18,412.40

Notes:

1. The June expenses include 4 months back payments to resident Ragi Jatha and legal fees.
2. The March expenses include higher maintenance expenses.

Appreciating All Religions —A Plea for Religious Literacy and Tolerance

—Paramjit Singh Sachdeva

(As it appeared in GLZ Digest No. 7355 of August 13, 2012)

On Sunday, 5 August 2012, six innocent Sikhs were mercilessly gunned down at their gurdwara in Wisconsin. The FBI is investigating a possible act of domestic terrorism. The alleged killer is reported to be a “skin-head” or “white-supremacist”. Many Sikhs and others in the government and media consider it a “hate crime” by someone who thought of them as Muslims because of their beards and turbans. Sikh religious leaders in India have appealed to U.S. authorities to identify the cause of this brutal attack on Sikhs so that such incidents could be prevented in the future.

The global Sikh community has supported its members during this time of grief, as have leaders and members of other religions, who have joined Sikhs in vigils and memorial services at various places. The U.S. President ordered the American flag to be flown at half-mast last week; and members of the local Muslim and Christian communities have participated in congregational services at some gurdwaras. Government leaders, policy makers, and politicians have expressed their condolences and promised some

measure of justice. Sikhs have responded with heartfelt thanks for this support, and have tried to explain, repeatedly, who we are and what we believe in. We have emphasized that we are not Muslims, and that our religion is separate and unique. We are a God-fearing, humanity-loving, peaceful, and productive community that seeks God's blessings for everyone. We do not deserve to be so misunderstood, harassed, and singled out for ill-treatment simply because of our beliefs and outward appearance. We hope our "inclusive" loving embrace of others will be reciprocated, and this will help heal our recent wounds and return to us some semblance of normalcy.

However, in my view, these efforts, though necessary, are unlikely to be sufficient. By labeling such incidents simply as "hate crimes" and responding with well-intentioned but inadequate measures to stem violence against Sikhs (and Muslims) in America, the response of civic and religious leaders may address only the symptoms rather than the real causes of violence against various religious minorities in the country.

Neither the recent violence, nor the response to it thus far, is particularly new. In April this year, for example, the co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on Indians and Indian-Americans sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney General urging the FBI to collect data on hate crimes committed against them. "The more information our law enforcement agencies have on violence against Sikh-Americans, the more they can do to help prevent these crimes and bring those who commit them to justice," said the co-chairman's statement. This is undoubtedly true. But it does not address the root causes of a deep-seated multi-layered problem.

By focusing mainly on the violence that *results from* hate, we fail to address the underlying religious intolerance and ignorance that *lead to* hate. By focusing mainly on the immediate needs of the affected minority community, we avoid tackling the longer-term needs of the majority community—of living up to the true tenets of its *own* faith—which requires that all Christians treat *all* humans, made in God's image according to the Holy Bible, with love and respect. And by focusing mainly on the security needs of the Sikhs and Muslims (whose mosque in Missouri was burnt down in a suspected arson attack just a day after the gurdwara shooting), we overlook the equally-pressing spiritual needs of the rest of society amongst whom they live.

We forget also that the Christians' Lord is the same One God that the Sikhs and Muslims too believe in and pray to in their homes and houses of worship. An attack in or on a gurdwara or mosque ought to be as offensive to Christians as it is to Sikhs or Muslims, for it really *is* an attack on a place of worship that honors the same God that we *all* believe in. Hence, besides the investigation that the U.S. criminal justice system has promised us, we need also to seek in our own hearts and in American society as a whole the more-important Justice that our common God has promised—to Christian, Sikh, and Muslim alike.

Regrettably, as Stephen Prothero noted some years ago, the United States "is a deeply religious nation, yet many Americans—even the most devout—are shockingly ignorant about religion." His aptly titled book "Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn't" sought to educate Americans with a "dictionary" of religious literacy that focuses on information US citizens "need to know to make sense of their country and the world."

Despite such worthy efforts, it seems to me that some (and perhaps many) of us remain as illiterate as ever. One of the reasons could be that even such well-intentioned attempts as Prothero's did not do

justice to the minority religions in America. In the case of Sikhism, for example—even though it is the fifth largest religion in the world, with over 25 million adherents worldwide—his dictionary of religious “literacy” devotes only one page to this important faith, and provides no suggestions at all for further reading on Sikhism.

Other recent efforts in this direction also seem deficient. For example, while it is good that the Pew Research Center’s 2012 survey report *Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths* draws attention to the fact that Asian Americans now constitute 5.8 percent of the American population (almost three times the Jewish population), the report focuses almost entirely on the Christians, Buddhists, and Hindus amongst them—and gives scant attention to the hundreds of thousands of Sikhs and Muslims who live in this country and contribute whole-heartedly to its growth and development.

Equally importantly, we Sikhs too must accept our share of responsibility for this ignorance about Sikhism in America. Despite having been in this great country for over one hundred years, and despite having established a number of nation-wide Sikh organizations for advocacy, research, education, and interfaith outreach, we are still trying to explain the basic tenets of our faith to the general public. We are still at an early stage of establishing beyond doubt for the ordinary American that despite our beards and turbans we are “not Muslims” and ought not to be mistaken as such; and, of course, our Muslim brothers and sisters ought not to be targeted either, for they too are equally deserving of First Amendment rights of freedom of religion.

Perhaps in the future we’ll set the bar much higher than we seem to have done thus far. Meanwhile, increased religious literacy sorely remains the need of the hour. Following this time of acute distress among Sikhs (and Muslims, who were presumably the real targets of the temple shooter), hopefully a much stronger, more ambitious, and more effective longer-term strategic effort will be undertaken by ordinary Sikhs and our leaders, as well as by proponents of *all* other faiths in America, to reach out to their own and other communities to ensure that *everyone* learns not only about their own but about others’ religions too.

In this, the main message ought to be that it is not enough to merely know and follow one’s own religion, important though that is. God is One, as is humankind (as Sikhs believe); but religions are many, and religious diversity is here to stay. Both the commonalities and differences of our religions matter a great deal to us; and we need to know what these are. As I have suggested in my recent books *Appreciating All Religions* and *Appreciating Sikhism*, unless we make a concerted effort to gain a basic understanding and appreciation of others’ religions, our views of the adherents of religions other than our own are unlikely to be accurate, fair, or sensible. We need to engage with others not only to show that we are “the same” (for example, as “American”, as peace-loving, etc.), but also because we are different in some important ways. This is as true for Sikhs as it is for others who know so little about us.

We can no longer afford to remain religiously illiterate in America, or in the world. In an intimately inter-connected world in which religion and politics intersect as never before, how we relate to other religions could help determine whether we inexorably move towards mutual destruction or not. Without mutual respect among all religions and tolerance of our religious differences, it would be hard to reduce endemic religious conflict and to move towards meaningful interfaith interaction and dialogue.

But if we were to become even-minimally literate about other religions so that we could genuinely appreciate and respect all of them, our mutual gain would be immense. At the very least we would know that with Divine Grace—and as revealed in the Holy Bible, the Holy Qur'an, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, and the ancient Vedas and Bhagavad Gita, to name just a few of humanity's sacred scriptures—eternal peace in heaven (or its equivalent) will ultimately be attained by faithful followers of *all* religions, be they Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Hindus, or any other.

May the latest victims of the alleged “hate crime” in Wisconsin rest in peace! And may we learn to appreciate *all* our religions and seek to collectively prevent such senseless violence in America!

Gur Fateh to all!

Medical Corner

Diabetes: Know the Facts –

Parveen K. Verma, DO FACE Endocrinologist

Most of us know someone suffering from diabetes. It is, apart from being one of the most prevalent diseases in the world, also a large contributor to many other complications that can significantly affect quality of life such as heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and blindness.

The two most common types of diabetes are **Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes** Mellitus. Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease resulting in the loss of the cells that produce insulin in the pancreas. These patients no longer produce insulin at all and require lifelong treatment with insulin injections. The majority of the population suffering from diabetes has Type 2 Diabetes. This usually occurs later in life and can be treated with pills, insulin administered by and injection or a combination of both. With the rise in the obesity epidemic we are unfortunately seeing Type 2 Diabetes being diagnosed at a younger age.

With an estimated 60.1 million people living with diabetes, India has the world's largest diabetes population, followed by China with 43.2 million. We are at higher risk of developing diabetes due to increased insulin resistance. Insulin is produced by the pancreas however when you have diabetes the body does not make enough insulin causing higher blood sugar levels and the body needs more insulin to maintain blood sugars in the normal range. Because the distribution of body fat is more central surrounding vital organs rather than subcutaneous or just under the skin, this contributes to insulin resistance. The Indian population develops diabetes earlier because of the predisposition to central obesity therefore it is very important to take steps in preventing this from happening.

Type 2 diabetes can remain undetected for many years and the diagnosis is often made from associated complications or incidentally through an abnormal blood or urine glucose test. It is very important to go for routine blood work especially if you have other risk factors for developing diabetes such as family history, obesity, or history of diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes). **If your fasting blood**

sugar is above 126 or a random sugar is above 200 confirmed on a separate test, you meet criteria for diabetes and need to take steps to control the disease before it starts to control you.

Once you are diagnosed with diabetes it is crucial to understand and manage the disease effectively. Just taking your medications daily are not enough to know that you are well controlled. Only you can control this disease by being knowledgeable and empowering yourself to perform important self management skills. Managing diabetes can oftentimes seem like an overwhelming process. Understanding a few basic concepts will allow you to take control of this disease and continue to enjoy a healthier life.

Monitor your blood sugar – The American Diabetes Association recommends that fasting or premeal blood sugars range between 90-130 and 2 hours after meals should never exceed 180mg/dl. If your values fall outside this range reconsider what you are eating and discuss with your doctor a change in your medication regimen as it may not be working effectively.

Understand your medication – There are many different combinations of medication for diabetes including insulin. Your physician will prescribe a combination which addresses pre-meal and after meals blood sugars. Some of the newer medications may also assist in weight reduction. It is very important you understand when to take your medications and exactly how they affect your blood sugars. Many people need more than one diabetes medicine to control their disease. They work together to lower blood sugars. Taking them at random times can cause swings in your blood sugar and affect how you feel.

Know your HgA1c – This measurement informs you how controlled your diabetes is over a 3 month period. It should be part of the blood work done by your physician. It is the ‘report card’ of how well your medications are working in combination with how well your exercise and meal planning are effectively keeping things under control. Strive to keep your HgA1c less than 7% and preferably less than 6.5% according to the American College of Endocrinology. Always know your HgA1c and keep an interactive conversation with your physician about what can be done to further reduce this number.

Exercise – A minimum of 30 minutes of exercise (brisk walk) should be done at least 5 days per week. This not only strengthens muscles, it will reduce blood sugars, blood pressure and provide a general sense of well-being.

Portion Control/Meal Planning – This may be the hardest lifestyle skill to learn in managing diabetes. Watching the portion of carbohydrate, starchy foods that break down into simple sugars, is extremely important to ensure that you are doing your part to control your diabetes. **Controlling your sugar intake is not just about sweets, but starchy foods that break down into simple sugars.**

Rule of thumb:

1 carbohydrate serving = 15 grams of carbohydrate.

In general, in a typical meal, one should not exceed an average of 60 grams or 4 carbohydrate servings. The following are typical serving sizes:

1 slice bread, white, whole grain	1 dosa approx 10" diameter	½ C potato sabji*
½ roti (bajra, makai, jowar)	1 small idli	1 small potato boiled or baked
1 Chapati, 6" diameter	2 mini rava idlis	½ potatoes mashed
¾ paratha or thepla, 6"*	25g/3tbsp atta(whole wheat)	½ C sweet potatoes
½ paneer paratha	1 C Milk/yogurt	½ C peas
¾ potato paratha, 6"*	1 Small apple/banana/kiwi	½ C corn
1/4th of 8"x 2" naan	½ C cooked hot cereal	½ C lentils cooked
½ of a pita bread	1/3 C white rice cooked	½ C sambar
2 puris 5"	1/3 C brown rice cooked	1 C aloo gobhi
½ of a 2oz bagel	1/3 C tamarind rice	½ C dhansak*
1 small croissant*	½ C biryani/pulao*meat	¾ C spinach and garbanzo beans
½ English muffin	½ C khichadi/khichri cooked	curry
	1 square dhokla	

There are many alternative therapies which may help in reducing blood sugar but may not be substitute for prescribed medications. Talk to your doctor about therapies such as cinnamon, chromium, omega 3 fatty acids, bitter melon and fenugreek. Although no specific dosing regimen has been approved by the FDA, these nutritional supplements may lower blood sugars but have never been proven to 'cure' or significantly stabilize diabetes so be cautious in using them and always talk to your doctor before discontinuing or changing your diabetes regimen. Additional information on this topic can be viewed at <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/diabetes/CAM-and-diabetes.htm>.

Adhering to the above will empower you to manage diabetes and live a healthy, active life. **Prevention is key!** Take steps now if you have diabetes or are at risk for developing diabetes to increase your activity and modify your dietary intake. These strategies alone have been proven to reduce your risk of developing diabetes.

For SFV Voice suggestions, comments, participation, article contribution, etc., please contact:

Surjeet S. Sidhu,

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