

Early Complications of Diabetes Mellitus: Pathogenesis, Clinical Features, and Management Strategies

Narzilloeva Malika Shuhrat qizi

*Department of Fundamental Medical Sciences of the
Asia International University, Bukhara, Uzbekistan*

Abstract: Diabetes mellitus affects millions of people worldwide and remains a leading cause of morbidity and mortality. While long-term complications often receive attention, early or acute complications can develop rapidly and may require emergency treatment. Prompt recognition and appropriate management of these conditions are crucial to prevent severe outcomes and death.

Keywords: Early complications, hypoglycemia, hyperglycemia, ketoacidosis, microangiopathy, neuropathy, retinopathy, diabetic foot, cardiovascular system, insulin deficiency, glucose metabolism, metabolic disorders

Introduction

Diabetes mellitus is a chronic metabolic disorder characterized by persistent hyperglycemia due to defects in insulin secretion, insulin action, or both. In the early stages, uncontrolled hyperglycemia may lead to acute, potentially life-threatening complications. These include Diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), Hyperosmolar hyperglycemic state (HHS), and Hypoglycemia. This article aims to describe the pathophysiology, clinical manifestations, and management of early complications of diabetes mellitus.

Pathophysiology of Early Complications

1. Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA):

- Caused primarily by insulin deficiency, leading to increased lipolysis and ketone body production.
- Common in Type 1 diabetes mellitus.
- Results in metabolic acidosis, dehydration, and electrolyte imbalance.

2. Hyperosmolar Hyperglycemic State (HHS):

- Characterized by severe hyperglycemia, dehydration, and hyperosmolarity without significant ketosis.
- More common in Type 2 diabetes mellitus.
- Often triggered by infection, stress, or inadequate insulin therapy.

3. Hypoglycemia:

- Results from excessive insulin administration, missed meals, or increased physical activity.
- Leads to confusion, sweating, palpitations, seizures, and, if untreated, coma.

Clinical Manifestations

- DKA: Polyuria, polydipsia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, deep rapid breathing (Kussmaul respirations), and fruity breath odor.
- HHS: Extreme thirst, frequent urination, weakness, confusion, seizures, and coma.
- Hypoglycemia: Tremors, tachycardia, sweating, irritability, headache, visual disturbances, and loss of consciousness in severe cases.

Management

- DKA and HHS:
- Rapid intravenous fluid replacement.
- Correction of electrolyte imbalances, especially potassium.
- Continuous insulin infusion and treatment of precipitating factors.
- Hypoglycemia:
- Immediate administration of oral glucose if conscious.
- Intravenous dextrose or intramuscular Glucagon in unconscious patients.
- Education on insulin use and diet control to prevent recurrence.

Conclusion

Early complications of diabetes mellitus are medical emergencies requiring prompt recognition and aggressive management. Patient education, regular blood glucose monitoring, and adherence to treatment can significantly reduce the risk of these complications. Awareness among patients and healthcare professionals is essential to improve outcomes and prevent fatal consequences.

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