

November is American Diabetes Month

Consider These 5 Simple Steps to Help Prevent Diabetes

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Diabetes is a disease in which the body has a shortage of insulin, a decreased ability to use insulin, or both. Insulin, a hormone, is important because it allows glucose (sugar) to enter our cells and be converted to energy. When diabetes is not controlled, glucose and fats remain in our blood and, over time, damage vital organs. Diabetes affects more than 23 million people (7.8% of the population) in the United States.¹

“According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, almost one-in-four hospital dollars go to treat people with diabetes. The collective hospital bill for diabetes patients in 2008, the most recent year for which data is available, was almost \$83 billion,” says Robert Vento, senior vice president at Quorum Health Resources (QHR). “In this day of out-of-control healthcare costs, it’s in the interest of consumers, taxpayers and hospitals to fight diabetes in every way possible. We must encourage prevention through healthy living, and disease management through education and awareness.”

The most common form of diabetes is type 2 diabetes. While most cases of type 2 diabetes can be prevented, it remains the leading cause of diabetes-related complications, such as blindness, non-traumatic amputations and chronic kidney failure, among adults.

“Type 2 diabetes most commonly occurs in people over age 40, who are overweight. However, the disease has also started to appear more often in children because of the rise in obesity and lack of physical activity among our youth,” says Teresa Filan, Certified Diabetes Educator, at Sturgis Hospital. “The good news is that you can reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes by committing to a healthy lifestyle.”

Consider these tips, she says:

1. Get active! Regular physical activity can help improve your health in a number of ways. It can help:

- Reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease;
- Reduce your risk of some cancers;
- Strengthen your bones and muscles;
- Control your weight;
- Improve your mental health and mood; and

- Improve your ability to perform daily activities and prevent falls, especially among older adults.

Of equal importance, physical activity can help reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. It lowers blood sugar and boosts your sensitivity to insulin, which helps keep your blood sugar within a normal range.

2. Lose extra weight. If you're overweight, diabetes prevention may hinge on weight loss. Every pound you lose can improve your health. In fact, in one study, overweight adults who lost 5 to 10 percent of their body weight and exercised regularly reduced their risk of developing diabetes by 58 percent over three years.

3. Get plenty of fiber...it may reduce the risk of diabetes by improving your blood sugar control. Foods high in fiber include fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds.

4. Go for whole grains. Whole grains may reduce your risk of diabetes and help maintain blood sugar levels. For this reason, try to make at least half your daily grains whole grains. Just look for the word "whole" on breads, cereals and pasta products.

5. And don't forget a regular blood glucose screening, especially if you're age 45+ and overweight, or if you're overweight and have one or more additional risk factors for type 2 diabetes, such as a sedentary lifestyle or a family history of diabetes.

"It's also important to recognize the symptoms of diabetes and communicate these and other health concerns with your doctor," says Filan. "Symptoms of type 2 diabetes include frequent urination, unusual thirst, extreme hunger, unusual weight loss, blurred vision, extreme fatigue and irritability, cuts or bruises that are slow to heal, tingling/numbness in the hands or feet, and recurring skin, gum or bladder infections."

To learn more, visit www.diabetes.org or talk to your personal physician.

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This article courtesy of Sturgis Hospital and Quorum Health Resources (QHR).

¹ American Diabetes Association