

Show-Me Health

November 9, 2010

Diabetes Awareness

The Truth About Diabetes in America

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By the time you finish reading this article, 15 MORE American lives will be changed by a diagnosis of type-2 diabetes. According to the American Diabetes Association, one in three Americans, and one in two minorities, born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime if the present trends continue. In fact, according to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, nearly 415,000 adults in Missouri have been diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes is a disease so common that it strikes every 20 seconds. It is a disease with deadly consequences and –the good news—is **often preventable**.

Each year, National Diabetes Awareness Month, which takes place in November, offers people a chance to talk about the seriousness of diabetes and the importance of managing and preventing the disease. This year, the American Diabetes Association is asking, “How will you stop diabetes?” It begins with education/knowledge.

Against popular belief, diabetes isn't caused by eating sugar. Diabetes is caused by a combination of genetic and lifestyle factors. It is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life.

The exact cause of diabetes continues to be a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles. Being overweight does increase the risk for developing type 2 diabetes. If you have a history of diabetes in the family, eating a healthy meal plan and regular activity are recommended to manage weight.

A healthy meal plan for people with diabetes is the same as that for everyone – low in fat (especially saturated and trans fat), moderate in salt and sugar, with meals based on whole grain foods, vegetables and fruit. Starchy foods **are** part of a healthy meal plan. What is important is the **portion size**. Whole grain breads, cereals, pasta, rice and starchy vegetables like potatoes, yams, peas and corn can be included in meals and snacks. The key is portions. For most people with diabetes, having 3-4 small servings of carbohydrate-containing foods is about right. Whole grain starchy foods are also a good source of fiber.

Now, Halloween is over, and the candy has been eaten. The month after a holiday based primarily on sugar, comes Diabetes Awareness Month. The rates of diabetes in the US and worldwide are climbing

steadily upward, and the American Diabetes Association would like to change the trend. This would be the “treat.” The “trick” of diabetes prevention is: eating well, staying active and losing excess weight. These are smart choices for everyone, with diabetes or without.

So, take the Risk Test on-line from the American Diabetes Association website to determine your own risk level. Go to “Diabetes Basics” and click on “Risk Test.” About one quarter of all people with the disease are unaware that they have it. That means that thousands of Americans, in Missouri alone, are not protecting themselves from the dangers of diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is the leading cause of kidney disease; the leading cause of blindness in adults; and is responsible for the majority of lower extremity amputations.

Help us STOP DIABETES... It begins with you. Have your blood sugar checked. A simple blood test can be done at the Livingston County Health Center to screen for diabetes. And/or take the American Diabetes Association’s Diabetes Risk Test. Being aware of your risk may keep a mostly reversible condition of “pre-diabetes” from slipping into a full blown case of type 2 diabetes or keep the complications caused by diabetes from occurring.

All services of the health center are provided on a non-discriminatory basis.