

Diabetes Prevention and Control

Source: The American Society on Aging newsletter – *Diversity Current* reported on The Healthy Black Family Project (HBFP) that focused on Motivation and Support in diabetes prevention and control. (*Diversity Current*, Vol6, No. 4 (Fall 2005) pp 6-7)

Using the results from the US Diabetes Prevention Program, a clinical trial demonstrating that sustained lifestyle changes that included modest weight loss and physical activity substantially reduced progression to diabetes among older adults who were at very high risk.

Diabetes and high blood pressure are very serious problems in Native American communities, the positive news is that these problems can be prevented and controlled.

Participatory Action Research brings together residents and social networks in Native American communities activities that provide them with information, tools, resources and support to improving their health.

These activities include providing a trained exercise physiologist (or health coach) working with individuals and groups to increase physical activities; a nutritionist teaching different ways of shopping for and preparing foods, trained health advocates providing encouragement and support for individuals to change their behaviors; human genetic counseling students working with individuals to create family health histories; and several community-based partners providing health promotion and disease prevention services.

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As people get older, their risk for type II diabetes increases. Other risk factors associated with diabetes include obesity, family history of diabetes, race/ethnicity, and history of diabetes during pregnancy, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, an inactive lifestyle and stress.

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Often older adults believe their chances for changing their behavior and lifestyle to improve their health has long passed. Not so! DPP study found that losing a small amount of weight through healthy eating and increased physical activity helped to prevent type II diabetes in people over 60-plus age group. In fact 60-plus age group was more successful at preventing or delaying the onset of type II diabetes than were those in all other age groups.

SMALL STEPS TO STAY HEALTHY

Following are suggestions taken from HBFP program for Elders to eat healthy and maintain a healthy lifestyle:

- Make sure you eat breakfast every day. Eat healthy snacks between your major meals or eat several small meals instead of three big ones.
- Reduce your meal portions. You do not have to stop eating the foods you really like; just eat less of them. You do not have to eat everything on your plate!
- Increase the amount of vegetables and fruits you eat. Even if you are at a fast food restaurant, select the healthier food choices. Try different recipes for baking or broiling meat, chicken and fish.
- When you shop read the food labels – choose foods with lower fat, lower saturated fat, fewer calories, and less salt. Don't shop on an empty stomach.
- Drink more water. Avoid drinks, including juices that contain a lot of sugar. Share your dessert.
- Don't try to change your food intake and physical activity all at once. Try one new food (or a different way of cooking it) or activity each week. Learn what you can do to increase physical activity at home or work.
- Quit smoking – if you do not smoke, do not start. Learn how others smoking in home can affect your health.
- Know your family health history. Know what your risk are based on this history. Start with whatever information you have even if it is just your own medical history. Share it with your family and doctor. Continue to add new information.
- Learn what causes stress in your life and find ways to reduce it. Pamper yourself. Try different ways of relaxing.
- Honor your health – it is a gift!

Remember; small steps lead to big rewards!

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PREDIABETES and PRE-HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)

It is important for Elders to learn all they can about preventing and controlling diabetes and high blood pressure.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute have established new guidelines for pre-diabetes and pre-hypertension. These conditions act like warning signs, that a change in behavior is required to avoid diabetes and high blood pressure. Elders should be familiar with these guidelines and discuss them with their healthcare providers.

Pre-diabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough for a diagnosis of diabetes. Having pre-diabetes means a person is more likely to develop diabetes within ten years and also is at an increase risk for developing heart disease.

Risk Factors for Diabetes include:

- Overweight
- Inactive or low physical activity
- Sedimentary lifestyle
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Age 40 or over
- High Blood Pressure
- Family history of diabetes
- High glucose reading > 200 dl/mg

Reduce your risk by eating more fruits and vegetables and exercising at least 30 minutes per day.