

Can Diabetes type 2 be prevented? By Marie LoPresti, Community Nutritionist

Preventing or delaying the manifestation of diabetes sounds out of this world, but it is true. A form of diabetes that is closely related to absence of physical activity in the form of daily exercise and the presence of excessive weight, especially around the waist, can be prevented or delayed. And these are very good news!

But, what is diabetes type 2? It is a health condition in which the body cannot process sugars very well at the cellular level for the production of energy. For the processing of these sugars the body needs the hormone insulin. It is possible that the body is producing less of the hormone or that it can not function very well due to excessive body fat or lack of physical activity necessary for best utilization. The net result is that sugar levels rise above what is considered normal.

When a person has problems with blood sugars, it is manifested as blurry vision, personality changes (moodiness), frequent urination, excessive thirst and hunger, among others. A fasting blood sugar test, or in many cases, a blood sugar test after eating or drinking a special sugary drink, can detect diabetes or the pre-stages of it.

Even when the symptoms of diabetes are not apparent, if you have family members with diabetes, if you have more weight than what is adequate for your height or you do not exercise, a test to detect diabetes should be scheduled. Women that have given birth to babies of nine pounds or more (4.09 kilos or more) or that have had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy), should have the test done every year and take nutrition and exercise seriously to prevent or delay diabetes.

It is important to point out that a good control of the blood sugars can delay the complications of diabetes. Among these are: damage to nerve endings (reason why all organs are affected), damage to eyes, kidneys, heart, and brain. When blood sugars are not within the normal for extended periods of time, diabetics can experience impotence and slow digestion. Women with diabetes and capable of becoming pregnant, should consult a medical doctor before pregnancy due to the risks for the baby and the mother when sugars in blood are out of control.

“Closing the Gap”, an Osceola County Health Department’s diabetes prevention and education program, offers free seminars in Spanish and English geared towards the control of the blood sugars in people with diabetes. Also, activities are offered for the care of the diabetic’s general health like feet’s care to prevent ulcers and foot amputations. Other program activities have the objective of preventing obesity related diabetes.

During November, Diabetes Month, “Closing the Gap” will be doing free blood glucose screenings and blood pressure checks at various county places. On November 16th from 1:00 to 4:00 PM a Diabetes Health Expo will take place at the Kissimmee location of the

Health Department on 1875 Boggy Creek Road. Various screenings will take place and the nutritionist will be on hand to answer questions and give information.

Other activities slated for the year are: Supermarket tours, wellness cooking, wellness challenges for health and weight management, exercise sessions, diabetes and nutrition seminars, cholesterol and blood pressure management, and management of weight in children. Currently, "Closing the Gap" is accepting registrations for the Wellness Community Garden. In it participants learn and grow vegetables, fruits, and useful herbs. This is a joint project with the county's Extension Services. To know more about these activities and to reserve, call Closing the Gap at (407) 343-2082 or (407) 343-2076. Remember, you could be in charge of your health, prevent diabetes!