

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Cooperative Extension Service

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Diabetes

According to a recent survey by the Wyoming Department of Health there are nearly 2,000 adults living in Sheridan and Johnson counties that have diabetes. This is about 7% of the adult population, and puts us slightly below the national average of 8%. But don't get too excited, we're still well above the Healthy People 2010 objectives, which aim to reduce diabetes prevalence to less than 2.5% of the population. Even further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that there may be another 800 more diabetics living in our area that have not yet been diagnosed. Are you at risk?

As many of you probably know, diabetes is a group of diseases that result in an inability to properly regulate blood sugar, or glucose. Normally when glucose levels rise we release insulin to help move glucose from the bloodstream to cells in the body. Why is this important? If glucose isn't moved into cells it will begin to build up in the bloodstream, and consistently high blood glucose concentrations can damage blood vessels and nerves within the body. This damage can lead to many negative conditions including cardiovascular disease, kidney failure and severe vision loss or blindness. Fortunately, most these problems can be avoided simply by maintaining good control of blood glucose concentrations. However, this is not as easy as it sounds. There are several ways to help maintain blood glucose control depending on what type of diabetes an individual has.

Individuals with type 1 diabetes are not able to produce insulin and will need to take insulin shots, or use an insulin pump to help their body manage glucose. This type of diabetes is usually an autoimmune disease, meaning our own immune cells are acting against our ability to produce insulin, and is typically diagnosed in early adolescence. Those with type 2 diabetes are still able to make enough insulin, but their cells have become resistant to its effects. This type accounts for 90-95% of all diabetes cases. A particular cause hasn't been identified, but risk factors include family history, age, physical inactivity, and obesity. While you don't have much control over your family history or age, staying active and maintaining a healthy weight are two good ways to decrease your chances for developing type 2 diabetes. In addition, many type 2 diabetics can see big improvements with exercise, weight loss (if they are overweight), and dietary control. Exercise helps your body to regulate blood glucose without needing insulin, and eating properly can help you control the amount of glucose you get from food (typically by managing your carbohydrate intake). However, even with the help of diet and exercise, many individuals will still require medication to properly control their condition.

While careful attention is necessary, all diabetics can live long and healthy lives if they manage their condition properly. Plans for presenting *Dining with Diabetes in Wyoming*, a diabetes management educational program are currently underway. If you are interested in attending please email me or contact your local Extension office. *Kentz Willis, M.S., is the University Extension Educator in Nutrition and Food Safety for Sheridan and Johnson counties. He can be reached via email at kwillis3@uwyo.edu.*