

# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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## Diabetes & Activity

According to recent statistics, nearly 24 million people in the U.S. are currently living with diabetes. In addition, another 57 million are estimated to have pre-diabetes, a condition that puts them at an increased risk for developing diabetes. Though impressive, these are just numbers, and they cannot communicate the true cost of a disease that is largely preventable.

Similar to many chronic conditions, diabetes is not cheap. In fact, a recent study estimates the disease costs the U.S. over 200 *billion* dollars annually. This comprehensive study considered everything from direct medical costs like shots and pills to indirect costs, such as lost productivity and disability.

Unfortunately, costs like these are leading some individuals with diabetes to drastic measures—like cutting back on lifesaving medical care.

The Associated Press recently reported that the economic downturn is forcing some very difficult choices for those with the disease. Many are delaying necessary doctor's visits and skipping blood sugar checks. Some are forced to go even further by switching to less costly, and less effective medicines, or even 'rationing' their medicine.

Though these measures may save some money in the short term the consequences of uncontrolled diabetes are severe, and will quickly use up any money saved. Diabetes, if left unchecked, can lead to conditions like cardiovascular disease, kidney failure and severe vision loss or blindness.

What's the fix? Fortunately the answer can be simple (and cheap!) for many. We know that physical activity and weight management not only helps to prevent the most common type of diabetes (type II), but can also help to manage the complications as well.

I know, being active (especially with diabetes) can be difficult and time consuming. But consider this: last month a young team of eight cyclists completed the Race Across America (RAAM) in record time—covering the 3,000 mile course in just over 5 days and averaging over 23 miles per hour! What does this have to do with diabetes? These cyclists all race for Team Type 1, a team comprised entirely of individuals with Type 1 diabetes.

What about the rest of us that aren't physiological freaks of nature? There's a great list of local events at [www.waspyoming.com](http://www.waspyoming.com). One of these events, the Diabetes Dirt Duathlon donates proceeds to the Strip Assistance program—helping people to manage the burden of costly blood testing supplies. I find events like these a great way to keep me motivated to stay active during the busy summer months.

And if you're not the racing type? Even better—you get to stay active while avoiding race entry fees and the stress of competition. Just 150 minutes of activity per week will greatly reduce your risk for many chronic diseases, including diabetes.

The Extension office is planning another series of Dining with Diabetes classes to begin August 18 in Buffalo. This is a 5-class program that includes diabetes education paired with recipe demonstrations. Please call our office (674-2980) for more information or to reserve your spot today! *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](mailto:kwillis3@uwyo.edu).*