



Cooperative Extension Service

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Diabetes

According to recent statistics, nearly 24 million people in the U.S. are currently living with diabetes, including nearly 2,000 adults in Sheridan and Johnson counties. In addition, there may be another 800 more people in our area with diabetes that have not yet been diagnosed, and over 4,000 that have pre-diabetes, a condition that puts them at a greatly increased risk for developing diabetes. Are you at risk?

As many of you probably know, diabetes is a group of diseases that result in an inability to properly regulate sugar (glucose) in the blood. 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 high blood glucose can damage blood vessels and nerves within the body.

This damage caused by high blood glucose 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, for people with diabetes this is not as easy as it sounds.

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. Those with type 2 diabetes are still able to make enough insulin, but their cells have become resistant to its effects. This type is the most common, and accounts for 90-95% of all diabetes cases. A particular cause for type 2 diabetes has not 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 simple ways to decrease your chances for developing type 2 diabetes. In fact, just 150 minutes of activity per week will greatly reduce your risk for many chronic diseases, including diabetes.

In addition to preventing the disease, many people with type 2 diabetes can see great improvements by increasing their activity, losing weight, and eating the right foods. Being physically active 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).

The Extension office is planning another series of Dining with Diabetes classes to begin March 3 in Sheridan. This is a 5-class program that includes diabetes education paired with physical activity and cooking. It is a great opportunity for people with diabetes, pre-diabetes, and family members wanting to learn more about how they can help. 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 Northeast Wyoming. He can be reached via email at kwillis3@uwyo.edu.*