

Diabetes & Kidney Awareness



March is National Kidney Month and Diabetes Alert Day is March 27th.

Diabetes is a serious disease that affects nearly 26 million children and adults in the United States. One quarter of them do not know they have it. One in three American adults have prediabetes which puts

them at a high risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. Early diagnosis is crucial to successful treatment and delaying or preventing some of the complications that may occur, including heart disease, blindness, kidney disease, stroke, amputation and death.

Increasing awareness is critical to the prevention of diabetes. It is imperative that we as health professionals actively engage members in preventative behaviors such as weight loss, physical activity and healthy eating habits.

Editor-in-Chief:

Tiffany Brunk, Process Expert Sr., Denver

Assignment Editor:

Anita Gurwin, BSN, RN, Client Operations Manager, Denver

Contributing Writers:

Denine Rogers, RD, LD

References

1. <http://nkdep.nih.gov/> - National Kidney Disease Education Program
2. <http://ndep.nih.gov> - National Diabetes Educational Program

Diabetes Alert Day - Awareness and Prevention

This year on the fourth Tuesday in March is a one day wake-up call to inform the American public about the seriousness of diabetes. This day is Diabetes Alert Day! So many people do not realize that Type 2 diabetes runs in their family and they may be at risk for developing the disease. Approximately one in four Americans with diabetes has it and doesn't know it.

You can take this test from the National Diabetes Educational Program (NDEP) at http://ndep.nih.gov/media/you_could_be_at_risk.pdf to see if you are at risk for diabetes.

What Are Risk Factors for Diabetes?

There are many factors that increase your risk for diabetes, some of which include:

- Being age 45 or older
- Being overweight. Check out the At-Risk Weight Chart to find out where your weight falls.
- Have a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes
- Have a family background that is African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Asian American or Pacific Islander.

- Have had diabetes when you were pregnant (this is called gestational diabetes) or gave birth to a baby weighing 9 pounds or more.
- Have been told that your blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are higher than normal.
- Have a blood pressure that is 140/90 or higher, or having been told that you have high blood pressure.
- Having cholesterol (lipid) levels that are abnormal. A HDL cholesterol ("good" cholesterol) is less than 35 or a triglyceride level is higher than 250.
- Being fairly inactive and having a physical activity level less than three times a week.
- Having been told that you have polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- The skin around your neck or in your armpits that appears dirty no matter how much you scrub it. The skin appears dark, thick and velvety. This is called acanthosis nigricans.
- Have been told that you have blood vessel problems affecting your heart, brain, or legs.

If you have any of the items above, be sure to talk with your health care

team about your risk for diabetes and whether you should be tested.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes occurs when your body doesn't use food as it should. Your body needs sugar for energy. When you eat, most of the food is changed into glucose, a form of sugar. The sugar goes into your bloodstream but it doesn't need to stay there. The sugar needs to get inside the cells so it can burn up as energy. In order for the sugar to get into the cells, insulin must be present and working. Insulin is a hormone made by the pancreas and it acts as a key to allow the sugar to get inside the cell.

If you have diabetes the sugar in your body is unable to get into the cells where it can be used. This is because either there isn't enough insulin or your body can't use the insulin like it should. If there is too little insulin or if the insulin isn't being used correctly, sugar builds up in your blood which is called high blood sugar or hyperglycemia.

Diabetes will not go away and there is no cure for it. But it can be treated and you can do a lot to control diabetes. There are two main ways in which diabetes can be prevented from happening:

- A healthy meal plan – speak to a Registered Dietitian about obtaining a nutritional consult
- Regular exercise - Get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity five days a week.

The National Diabetes Educational Program (NDEP) has a free program called "Small Steps. Big Rewards." It is a GAME PLAN kit that is based on the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) study results and shows how just small steps can help prevent many of the more severe complications that occur with diabetes.



National Kidney Month



March is also National Kidney Month and the National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP) is making effort to raise awareness about the seriousness of kidney disease, the importance of testing and the availability of treatment to prevent or slow kidney failure. The program has a list of things you can do to prepare for National Kidney Month, and it includes steps such as:

1. If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, or a family history of kidney failure, you may be at risk for kidney disease. Schedule an appointment with your health care provider to get your blood and urine checked.
2. If you have been diagnosed with kidney disease, pledge to explore healthy diet and lifestyle changes to keep your kidneys healthier. You can do this by seeing a Registered Dietitian
3. Remember to ask loved ones with any of the key risk factors for kidney disease to get their blood and urine checked for kidney disease.
4. If you are planning a family reunion, get a free copy of NKDEP's Family Reunion Guide to help family members make the kidney connection.
5. Work with your faith-based organization to arrange a Kidney Sunday's event in March for National Kidney Month. NKDEP has a free Kidney Sunday's toolkit to help you educate your faith-based community about kidney health.
6. Become an organ donor.
7. Order free materials for Spanish-speaking clients or patients at risk for and recently diagnosed with kidney disease.
8. Earn a Certificate of Training in CKD Nutrition Management from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
9. Tell others about NKDEP and its free resources.