



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

March 23, 2009

For Immediate Release

Contact: Stephanie Marquis, 608-266-1683

Type 2 Diabetes Poses Health Disparity Challenge

March 24th is Diabetes Alert Day

In recognition of Diabetes Alert Day on March 24th, state health officials stress that major disparities exist in diabetes prevalence. In Wisconsin, American Indians have the highest rate of diabetes, at almost six times the rate of whites. African Americans and Hispanics have the second and third highest rates, nearly one and a half times more than whites, respectively. Asians have a diabetes rate just slightly higher than whites.

“People of all backgrounds should talk to their health care provider to learn more about their risk for developing Type 2 diabetes and pre-diabetes,” says Dr. Seth Foldy, State Health Officer. “When left undetected and untreated, diabetes can cause blindness, kidney failure, heart disease and nerve damage.”

There are two general types of diabetes, both of which cause high levels of sugar in the blood. Type 1 diabetes is unpreventable and is usually diagnosed before the age of 30. With Type 1 diabetes, the body produces little or no insulin, which helps controls the amount of sugar in the blood.

Type 2 diabetes is commonly diagnosed after the age of 40, although it now often occurs at a younger age due in part to childhood obesity. With Type 2 diabetes, the body becomes resistant to the effects of insulin. The onset of Type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented by maintaining a healthy weight. A low-fat diet rich in fruits and vegetables and adequate physical activity can help with this.

“Risk factors for Type 2 diabetes include family history, increasing age, lack of physical activity, and being overweight,” Foldy says. “While you can’t change your family history, you can make sure you follow a healthy eating plan and include physical activity in your day.”

People at risk can develop “pre-diabetes” several years in advance. These are higher-than-normal blood sugar levels that serve as a warning that lifestyle changes may be needed.

“Almost one in four overweight Americans has pre-diabetes,” says Foldy. “Your health care provider can diagnose diabetes or pre-diabetes with simple tests and prescribe a treatment plan.”

Communities can promote healthier environments and reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes by:

- Asking restaurants, school lunch programs vending companies and work cafeterias to offer healthy food choices.
- Promoting fruit, vegetable and whole grain consumption while limiting sweets and fatty foods.
- Expanding community physical activity opportunities, such as creating new biking/walking paths or opening school gyms and pools for community use.
- Helping people recognize the risk factors for Type 2 diabetes.
- Holding diabetes awareness and screening events.

- MORE -

The Department's Diabetes Prevention and Control Program (DPCP) is dedicated to improving the health of people at risk for or with diabetes. Forming and maintaining strong, active partnerships is key to achieving this mission. The DPCP uses a statewide approach to improve the health of people at risk for or with diabetes by working with health systems, designing population-based community interventions and health communications, performing outreach to high-risk populations, conducting surveillance and evaluation of the burden of diabetes, and coordinating efforts through the Wisconsin Diabetes Advisory Group.

For more information about Wisconsin's Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, visit <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/diabetes/index.htm>

- END -