

Are You at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes?



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This lesson includes 3 culturally appropriate brochures in addition to 2 PowerPoint visuals for you to use with your audiences.

Almost 95% of people with diabetes have type 2—a chronic disease that develops so slowly most people do not even realize they have it for as long as ten years! Not treating type 2 diabetes produces serious health problems. Asking your doctor to check your blood for type 2 diabetes is very important to avoid additional health problems.

ASK:

What is diabetes?

SAY:

A number of you said diabetes means there is too much sugar in the blood. That is true. Others say diabetes means there is not enough insulin to take care of the sugar or glucose in your blood – that is also true. With type 2 diabetes, insulin is produced, but it does not work well enough to help the sugar get from your blood into your cells to give you energy. When this happens, your body's cells begin to die causing problems.

Think of insulin as a taxi or car and sugar is its passenger. If a taxi is broken down, it can't take you where it needs to go. The same goes for insulin and sugar; when you don't have enough taxis (insulin) you get sugar built up in your blood because the taxi (insulin) cannot help it get into your cells.

ASK:

Why would someone have high blood sugar?

SAY:

Blood always has some sugar in it to produce energy, but too much sugar is not good for your health. Having too much sugar in your blood for long periods of time causes problems like tiredness, loss of eye sight, kidney problems, nerve problems in your feet and other places in your body.

These problems are very serious! Even though someone has not been diagnosed with diabetes, they can still have serious health conditions causing health problems. That is why it is very important for you to ask your doctor to check your blood for diabetes every 3 years after you are 45 years old.

ASK:

What puts someone at risk for type 2 diabetes?

SAY:

Researchers are really not sure what causes type 2 diabetes. They do, however, know some things that put people at risk for getting the disease. Maybe you fit into one of these categories:

1. Being overweight
2. Being over the age of 30
3. Being African American, Hispanic or Native American
4. Giving birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds
5. Having high cholesterol
7. Having high blood pressure (140/90)

People do not get type 2 diabetes because they have a “sweet tooth.” Sweets can make you gain weight and put you at a higher risk for diabetes, but just because you like to eat sweets, does not mean you will develop type 2 diabetes.

There is no such thing as a “touch of sugar” or being “borderline diabetic.” Either you have diabetes or you don’t – just like being pregnant – either you’re pregnant or you’re not. Research shows that even if your blood sugar levels are slightly higher they can be treated.

SAY:

Here are some questions I would like for you to answer. Do you...?

- ☞ feel thirsty all the time?
- ☞ have to use the restroom often?
- ☞ often feel tired or hungry?
- ☞ lose weight without trying?
- ☞ have sores that take a long time to heal?
- ☞ have dry itchy skin?
- ☞ have less feeling or experience tingling in the feet?
- ☞ have blurry eyesight?

SAY:

The more questions you answered “yes,” the more likely you are to have diabetes. Diabetes is a serious disease that does not go away – doctors refer to this as a “chronic” disease because it does not go away. However, people with diabetes can control it!

Remember, after age 45, you should have your blood sugar level checked every 3 years! Ask your doctor to include this important test in your physical exam. If your sugars are even a little high, your doctor and registered dietician can help you lower them.

Texas Cooperative Extension also offers FREE/low cost classes for persons with type 2 diabetes. If you want to learn more about diabetes or know of someone who would benefit from these classes, please tell them to call their local county Extension office for more information.