

March 2007

# The Health Advisor

By Brooke Bennett

## March 27 is Diabetes Alert Day!

The American Diabetes Association reports that there are 20.8 million children and adults in the United States who have diabetes. Unfortunately, about 33 percent don't even know they have the disease – could you be one of them? In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that approximately 26 percent of adults have some form of pre-diabetes – a silent, symptom-free condition that often develops several years before the onset of type 2 diabetes. Diabetes Alert Day is a call to action that you can't afford to ignore – the devastating disease is the most common cause of blindness, kidney failure, and amputations in adults and a major cause of heart disease and stroke. Help fight diabetes by sharing this article with family, friends and neighbors. A little knowledge can make a big difference!

### Am I at risk for diabetes?

Here is a simple test to see if you should be tested for diabetes. Check off each item that applies to you.

- Always tired  Always hungry  Unexplained weight loss
- Wounds that don't heal  Sexual dysfunction  Overweight
- Family history of diabetes  Blurred vision  Always thirsty
- Vaginal infections  Numbness/tingling in feet
- Frequent urination  Blood sugar over 126 mg/d

If you checked 7 or more of the above items, you need to get tested for diabetes! Call your doctor and schedule an appointment today!

### What is pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is a serious medical condition. It is diagnosed when blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. People with pre-diabetes are at greater risk for heart disease and stroke than people with normal blood sugar levels. Many people with untreated pre-diabetes develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years. Recent studies have shown that long-term damage to the body, especially the heart and circulatory system, can occur during pre-diabetes even if type 2 diabetes does not develop.

### I have pre-diabetes... what should I do?

If you have pre-diabetes, you can and should do something about it. Studies have shown that people with pre-diabetes can prevent or delay the development of type 2 diabetes if they make basic lifestyle changes. These important changes include modest weight loss and regular exercise. Experts recommend that people with pre-diabetes try to engage in some form of physical activity for at least 30 minutes each day and reduce their weight by 5-10 percent (in other words, if you have pre-diabetes and weigh 150 pounds, you should try to walk for 30 minutes each day and work toward losing 7-15 pounds). In fact, for some people with pre-diabetes, making these changes early on can actually reverse high blood sugar levels and bring them back to normal. Remember to talk to your doctor before starting a new diet or exercise program and be sure to get your blood sugar tested at least once each year.

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