Stopping Diabetes in its Tracks

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Carrie Archibald demonstrates what 5 pounds of fat looks like by holding a 5-pound fat prostate. Being overweight or obese is one of several risk factors for diabetes.

For many of us, it is hard to imagine the daily care required to control diabetes. For those with the disease, a normal day consists of constantly monitoring blood sugar levels, coordinating meals, exercising, medications and/or insulin injections.

Diabetes is rapidly growing and a leading cause of death in the U.S. — impacting nearly 26 million people in the U.S. alone. What’s more, an estimated 7 million Americans have the condition but remain undiagnosed. High blood sugar symptoms are easy to dismiss. Excessive hunger, increased thirst, frequent urination, blurry vision, numbness in hands/feet or a waistline that exceeds 40 inches in men and 35 inches in women — are all causes for concern.

To clarify the urgency of leaving diabetes untreated, the ADA and DHHS introduced the term pre-diabetes to describe those individuals with high blood glucose (sugar) who are at risk for developing diabetes. Once a person has full-blown diabetes (Type 2), their bodies either do not make enough insulin or the insulin that they are making does not work properly.

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month and November 14 is World Diabetes Day. The month offers numerous opportunities to get involved locally and nationally to raise diabetes awareness.

The cause of diabetes varies, but obesity, inactivity and genetics are generally responsible. The various types of the disease include: type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes. Type 1 is typically diagnosed in children under 17-years-old (but has been seen in people who are in their 30's) and is an autoimmune disease. Onset is unrelated to lifestyle factors. Type 2 diabetes is typically seen in patients over 20 years-old but has been diagnosed in children as well. And gestational diabetes occurs in pregnant women. Most women with gestational diabetes do not remain diabetic after the baby is born, however they are at increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes in the future.

Patients with diabetes can help prevent complications such as cardiovascular disease or stroke with the right medical treatment. According to the ADA, reducing diastolic blood pressure from 90 mmHg to 80 mmHg in people with diabetes reduces the risk of major cardiovascular events by 50 percent.

When diabetes is left untreated it can lead to serious complications such as:

- Kidney failure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Nerve damage
- Blindness
- Lower-limb amputations not related to a trauma or accident
- Diabetes affects major organs including your heart, blood vessels, nerves, eyes and kidneys. It is important to take and/or insulin injections. Consult your healthcare professional to understand your risk for diabetes, or to determine the best treatment options that will help you manage the disease.

To curb symptoms, patients are encouraged to follow the suggestions below:

- Eat a diet plentiful in fruits and vegetables, moderate in lean protein and fish, whole grains, and skim milk/milk products.
- After seeking medical evaluation, engage in physical activity 30 minutes, 5 days a week.
- Do not smoke.
- Limit refined sugars and grains.

Maintain a healthy body mass index (BMI) <25

Throughout the month of November, there are several events nationwide. You can participate in activities such as the Lion’s Club Strides Walk for Diabetes Awareness or you can donate money online to fund research. For more information on diabetes and diabetes awareness, please visit the American Diabetes Association’s website at www.diabetes.org.

Carrie Archibald is a registered dietitian and ACE certified personal trainer, she has worked at North Valley Hospital for 11 years. Carrie provides both in-patient and out-patient nutrition counseling for people with diabetes.