



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 11-29-10

CONTACT: Leslie Kinnee

989-831-3669, kinnee@mmdhd.org

Mid-Michigan District Health Department

615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702, www.mmdhd.org

Early diabetes detection is critical

Learn to recognize warning signs

Stanton~ Any diabetic will tell you that living with diabetes can be a real challenge. Diabetics need to watch their weight, monitor what they eat, and may need to take medicine and check glucose levels on a daily basis. Such is life for nearly 23.6 million diabetic Americans, or 7.8% of the U.S. the population. But for another 5 million Americans, the real challenge is unknowingly living with the disease.

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that converts sugar, starches and other food into energy. When it comes to the cause of diabetes, both genetics and environmental factors, such as obesity and lack of exercise, appear to play roles.

There are two different types of diabetes. Type 1 is usually diagnosed in children and young adults. In this form, the body does not produce insulin, which is needed to convert sugar, starches, and other food into energy needed for daily life. Symptoms of Type 1 diabetes can include:

- Frequent urination
- Unusual thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Unusual weight loss
- Extreme fatigue and irritability

Type 2 diabetes, the most common form, occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin. The risk of Type 2 diabetes can be reduced by committing to a healthy lifestyle, which includes eating a balanced diet, increasing your level of physical activity, and maintaining a healthy weight. Symptoms can include:

- Any of the type 1 symptoms
- Frequent infections
- Blurred vision
- Cuts/bruises that are slow to heal
- Tingling/numbness in the hands/feet
- Recurring skin, gum, or bladder infections
- Very dry skin

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) urges anyone experiencing one or more of these early warning signs to visit their primary care physician. Diabetes often goes undiagnosed because many of its symptoms seem relatively harmless. Studies indicate that the early detection of diabetes and proper treatment can decrease the chance of developing complications, which may include kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, blindness, hearing loss, heart disease, skin disorders, numbness/tingling in the feet, and even amputation.

“The best way to tell if you have diabetes is to have your blood sugar tested,” said Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for MMDHD. “By the time a person is diagnosed with type two diabetes, irreversible damage will already have been done to the kidneys, eyes and blood vessels. This is why early detection and treatment are imperative,” he added.

While living with diabetes can certainly be a challenge, enjoying an active and full lifestyle as a diabetic is not impossible. If you have symptoms, visit your health care professional right away. And if you have been diagnosed with diabetes, continue to work with your physician to manage your condition, which will increase quality of life and reduce the chance of complications. For more information on diabetes please visit www.diabetes.org. or speak to your health care professional.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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