

PRESS RELEASE



Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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“CHCC Observes American Diabetes Awareness Month and Highlights the Issue of Prediabetes”

According to the 2016 CNMI Non-Communicable Disease and Risk Factor Hybrid Survey, up to 18% of adults in the CNMI have diabetes, compared to 12% of adults in the US mainland, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data from 2013-2015. Many people in the CNMI face serious health burdens as a result of complications due to diabetes, including amputation, infection, kidney disease, and blindness. Therefore, during American Diabetes Awareness Month this November, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) Diabetes Prevention and Control Program (DPCP) aims to raise awareness not only on diabetes and its complications, but on prediabetes as well.

Diabetes has many complications:

Diabetes is a serious disease that can lead to many complications if not managed properly.

- *Amputation:* Many people with diabetes have reduced blood flow to the feet. This can cause a loss or reduction of sensation in the feet, which makes it easy to get ulcers and infections. If not addressed, infections can lead to amputation of a toe, foot, or below the knee. Amputations can drastically decrease a person's quality of life if they are not able to walk or get to places on their own. Fortunately, most foot complications are preventable through regular foot care and proper footwear.
- *Kidney (Renal) Disease and Dialysis:* Diabetes can damage our kidneys when high levels of blood sugar make the kidneys filter too much blood. The extra work is hard for our kidneys to keep up. After years of extra work, our kidneys start to lose their filtering ability. Kidney disease follows, and treatments can be done to keep it from getting worse. If caught late, a person can be diagnosed with end-stage renal disease, which requires a kidney transplant or dialysis. Dialysis is not a cure, but a lifelong treatment.
- *Heart Disease and Stroke:* Your chances of having high blood pressure or a stroke are much higher if you have diabetes. It is important to talk to your doctor about keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol on target with healthy eating, physical activity, and medicine if needed. The closer you are to your targets, the better your chances are of preventing heart disease.

It is important to work with your doctor, follow recommendations, and take medications as directed. Remember that you are the key person in ensuring you stay healthy. Visit

<https://www.diabetes.org/diabetes/complications> for more information about diabetes and its complications.

What is prediabetes:

Prediabetes is when your blood sugar level is higher than normal, but not high enough yet to be considered type 2 diabetes. Prediabetes increases your risk of developing not only type 2 diabetes, but also increases your risk for heart disease and stroke. According to the CDC, more than 1 out of 3 Americans have prediabetes, and most of them do not even know they have it. One of the easiest ways to prevent diabetes is seeing your healthcare provider every year to check your risk for prediabetes through a blood sugar test. Prediabetes and diabetes management outcomes are better and more successful the earlier that high blood sugar is detected.

The first step is understanding your risk:

Many CNMI residents may have had prediabetes for years, but haven't had any symptoms. This is detrimental to their health, because not knowing you have prediabetes can lead to serious, life long problems such as type 2 diabetes.

It's important to get screened for prediabetes if you....

- are overweight or obese.
- are 45 years or older.
- have a mother, father, sister, or brother with type 2 diabetes.
- are not physically active.
- are a woman and you had diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) or gave birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds.
- have polycystic ovary syndrome.
- are of African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Pacific Islander, or Asian heritage.

You have the power to make a change:

- Get regular physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day 5 times a week. Do activities like walking, jogging, and swimming.
- Eat more fresh, whole foods rather than canned, processed foods.
- Have 5 servings of vegetables and fruits. Visit your local farmers market to see what produce is in season!
- Replace sugar-sweetened beverages with water or infused water.

The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program (DPCP) will be conducting activities throughout the month of November to highlight Diabetes Awareness Month and Prediabetes. The program will be on the KKMP morning show with Gary Sword to discuss the online prediabetes risk test, risk factors of prediabetes and diabetes, managing diabetes and kidney health, the importance of medication compliance, and self-management goals.

In collaboration with the Lions Club, the program will also be conducting a presentation at Marianas High School. The presentation will highlight sugar-sweetened beverages and their link to diabetes and

prediabetes. Students will be shown how to determine the amount of sugar in sugary beverages and the maximum amount of added sugar recommended per day. The main focus for students and young adults is to address the high consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, which increases the chances of developing diabetes.

On November 17, the Lions Club will be hosting a Diabetes Month Walk. The DPCP will be the beneficiary of this cause, and will be providing health information and blood sugar screenings at the event. Please check out our Facebook page, CHCC Public Health Services (@cnmipublichealth) for more information on this event.

To find out if you are at higher risk for prediabetes, take the free online risk test at the link below: <https://doihaveprediabetes.org/take-the-risk-test/>. If you score a 5 or higher, talk to your provider about your results and how you can lower your risk for prediabetes.

For more tips and information on lowering your risk for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes please call (670)-236-8703 and follow @CNMIPublicHealth on Facebook. Want some healthy recipes? Please follow @NutritionCouncilCNMI.

For more information about CHCC programs, please follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

This press release may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/index.php/press-releases>

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