

“Pre-Diabetes”

New Campaign Targets Those Most At Risk

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson recently launched an initiative targeting individuals who are most at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Jointly sponsored with the American Diabetes Association (ADA), the new campaign informs Americans, and the health care providers who treat them, about a new name for impaired glucose intolerance—“pre-diabetes”—that sharply increases the risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

“Pre-diabetes” is an increasingly common condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not yet diabetic. Also known as impaired glucose tolerance or impaired fasting glucose, “pre-diabetes” currently affects 16 million people in the U.S. HHS studies show that unless people with ‘pre-diabetes’ change their diet and level of physical activity, they are likely to develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years.

“The good news is if you have ‘pre-diabetes’ you can do something about it,” Secretary Thompson said. “We want people to know that ‘pre-diabetes’ is a serious condition that can be reversed or alleviated with modest changes in their daily routines—such as eating fewer calories and participating in a regular exercise program. In America, we spend a lot of money, once people get sick, to get them well again. It’s time for people to take a proactive role in their health care and focus on prevention.”

HHS and ADA released recommendations which state that overweight people age 45 and older should be screened for ‘pre-diabetes’ by their doctors during regular office visits. Adults younger than 45 should be screened if they are significantly overweight and have a family history of diabetes, low HDL cholesterol and high triglycerides, high blood pressure, history of gestational diabetes, gave birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds, or belong to a racial minority group.

“These new recommendations gives physicians added incentive to screen their middle-aged overweight patients for both type 2 diabetes and ‘pre-diabetes,’” said Dr. Francine Kaufman, newly elected president of ADA.

These recommendations are the result of findings released in 2001 from HHS’ Diabetes Prevention Program—a major clinical trial that found that diet and exercise resulting in a 5 to 7 percent weight loss lowered the incidence of type 2 diabetes by 58 percent.

Of the millions projected to have “pre-diabetes,” most remain unaware, stated Dr. Judith Fradkin of the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). “Now that we have shown that we can prevent or delay diabetes, we need to find the people who can benefit. These new practical recommendations can help.”

For more information about research and advances related to diabetes, go to <http://www.niddk.nih.gov> or call NIDDK’s National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse at 1-800-860-8747. ❖

