

Prediabetes: A Time to Prioritize

Prediabetes is a wake-up call! It's a time to prioritize the way you want to spend the rest of your life! Fifteen years ago, Abdu Taguri, Assistant Superintendent of Information Technology, was diagnosed with prediabetes. Initially, he took notice of this condition as it ran in his family, and he had witnessed firsthand its destructiveness. Yet, after a couple of months of positive lifestyle changes, Abdu's self-apparent "good health status" allowed him to dismiss his doctor's concerns. "I was in good health; I didn't need to see a doctor!" he said. He maintained this positive attitude for nine years without revisiting his physician. It wasn't until he experienced an unintentional drop in weight and loss of vision in his right eye that he started to think differently. "My wife convinced me to see a doctor!"

His doctor confirmed that the prediabetes Abdu ignored for years was now type 2 diabetes. He realized that his personal health must be his #1 priority. Abdu turned to the Polk County School Board Wellness Program and its *ABCs of Diabetes* for education, screenings and discounted medications and supplies.

"The Wellness Team made it simple and my wife was welcomed at all of the classes. Having Brenda as part of my team was key since we prepare most of our meals together and she generally buys the groceries," Abdu said. However, Brenda Taguri, Abdu's wife and PCSB Senior Coordinator of Demographics, has a double motive; she has prediabetes, too!

Prediabetes occurs when a person's blood glucose levels are higher than normal (>100 mg/dl), but not high enough (\leq 125 mg/dl) to be diagnosed with diabetes. According to the American Diabetes Association, approximately 79 million Americans have prediabetes. Based on Blue Cross Blue Shield 2010 screening results, 41% of Polk County School Board employees have prediabetes. Several studies show that people can have prediabetes for up to 10 years prior to developing diabetes; however, lifestyle changes can prevent or delay the onset of diabetes.

Following his diagnosis with diabetes four years ago, Abdu and Brenda have attended the required educational classes through the *ABCs of Diabetes*. Brenda found the meal planning class to be very beneficial for them, though all classes reinforced positive lifestyle and nutritional habits. The Taguris complete diabetic screenings every six months and establish realistic and healthy goals with the Wellness Program's dietitians.

Both Brenda and Abdu have found success through portion control and exercise. "When eating out, there are no forbidden foods. We just try to eat more veggies instead of simple carbohydrates and skip desserts," Brenda said. She points out that their hemoglobin A1c value (a measure of the overall effectiveness of blood glucose control over a 3-month period of time) is higher when they don't exercise regularly. "It is hard to exercise over the hot summer months, and it is easy to get out of the habit of walking regularly. My last screening results reflected poorer glucose control because I was not exercising," Brenda said.

The *ABCs of Diabetes* is a confidential program designed for both prediabetic and diabetic employees, retirees, spouses and dependents covered under the PCSB Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance plan. Monthly educations, quarterly screenings, and one-on-one health coaching is available at no cost to help you prevent the diagnosis of diabetes...or control it once diagnosed. Is it time to make your health your #1 priority? Call the Wellness Team at 648-3057 for more information.



Spotlight of the month shines on Abdu & Brenda Taguri

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Gender Differences & Diabetes

Everyone has heard that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, but who knew there were distinct gender differences when it came to diabetes? Surprisingly, women with diabetes have it worse than men. In general, women live longer than men primarily due to the lower rates of heart disease. However, the risk for heart disease is six times higher for women with diabetes than without. For men, their risk increases two-to-threefold. Heart disease is

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also more deadly in women with diabetes than for men who have the disease. Women can experience different symptoms of a heart attack, like nausea, shortness of breath, or jaw pain. Often times women don't

recognize them as heart attack warning signs and fail to get immediate treatment. Due to the fact that heart attacks are more common for men, women are often not treated as aggressively when cardiovascular risk factors arise.

Women who have a history of gestational diabetes or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) are at higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes. These women need to be on the alert and make lifestyle changes that include exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy weight, and eating properly. Women with diabetes need to ask their doctor about medications and whether their cholesterol levels are on target. Good communication with a doctor is a key factor to living a longer, more productive life.



Fall into Fitness

September 23rd marked the beginning of autumn with the occurrence of the autumnal equinox. The word "equinox" means "equal night" and refers to the time when the sun crosses the equator making the length of days and nights almost the same. What does all of this mean to us here in Polk County? The long hot days of the summer hurricane season are coming to a close; cooler temperatures are greeting us in the morning; and, holiday time-off is just around the corner! As we strive to schedule physical activity into our busy lives, fall is high time to enjoy the beauty that Polk County has to offer. Did you know that Polk County has 554 lakes and 37 nature parks spanning more than 25,000 acres?

To get a firsthand glimpse of nature, don't miss the November 12th guided hike on the NEW Circle B Connector, linking Ft. Fraser Trail and the Circle B Bar Reserve. For more information, visit www.friendsoftheparks.net or call 648-3057.

Length of Life Depends on Lifestyle

Nobody lives forever, but most of us hope to reach a ripe old age and remain active and healthy throughout our lives. Here are some basic tips for keeping your mind and body in good shape for along life:

- ◇ **Stop smoking.** Okay, this is obvious. But your chances of living for a long time are much better if you don't smoke—or if you quit.
- ◇ **Don't stop working.** Retirement can be risky, especially if you just quit and spend your days sitting on the sofa. Keep working in some capacity by volunteering or working part-time. Or have a plan for staying active after your retirement party ends.
- ◇ **Keep flossing.** Flossing every day can prevent bacteria in the mouth from growing and then moving to your bloodstream, where it can cause inflammation and hardening of the arteries, which contributes to heart disease.
- ◇ **Sleep just the right amount.** We need at least six hours of sleep per night for optimum physical and mental health. Less than that—or even more, some doctors say—can be detrimental. In one study of women ages 50 to 81, mortality over 14 years was higher among subjects who reported sleeping less than 6.5 hours.
- ◇ **Eat the right foods.** Avoid saturated fats, excess sugar and sodium, eat lots of fiber (especially for breakfast), and try to get your vitamins from foods.
- ◇ **Pay attention to your health.** Stressing about every ache and pain isn't necessarily productive. However, an extreme, "Don't worry, be happy," attitude about your body can be risky as well. Take your health seriously, and don't ignore the warning signs of trouble.

Want to know more about what you can do to avoid the high costs of a poor lifestyle? Contact your Wellness Team health professionals at 648-3057 for free and confidential services.

**Great American
Smoke-Out
November 17
Is it Your
Time to
BUTT OUT?**



Dear Wellness Team:

Thank you for asking me to share my diabetes story with my peers. On January 6, 2011, I was diagnosed with diabetes—possibly type 2. The only prior symptom was chronic fatigue, but I believed that the fatigue was a result of sleep apnea. It was the blood glucose reading of over 500, along with an A1c of 10.7, that led my primary care physician to refer me to a specialist. After further testing by an endocrinologist, it was determined that I had type 1 diabetes, which was formerly called juvenile diabetes and is believed to be an immunological disorder.

In my early to mid thirties, I had made some changes to improve my diet and exercise habits due to a family history of Type 2 diabetes. I realize now that I was only half way to a “healthy lifestyle,” but the trip was made easier by making small steps over time.

I learned about the *ABCs of Diabetes* through a Wellness Wednesday article—the eNews we all get in our inbox. (Take the time to read these; they are a great resource for us all!) At first, I was apprehensive to join the program, as I was upset and embarrassed about the diagnosis. The kindness and professionalism of Janet Armitage and the rest of the staff assured me that they were here for one reason—to help me better manage my diabetes. The ABCs program has been an incredible resource for saving money and improving the health of my entire family. My son sees that it is not that difficult to eat a more balanced diet, once you make it a habit.

The beginning of this journey was extremely difficult as I cut out the foods I had grown to love including candy, cake, breads, ice cream, and potatoes. Taking small steps has proved helpful, as I learn how different foods affect my blood sugar and how I feel as I eat them. I have learned to get my “fix” with Greek yogurt or cottage cheese mixed with jelly or apple butter. When I want pizza, I purchase spinach and herb tortillas, dress them with all my favorite toppings, and toast them to a beautiful golden brown. For a low carbohydrate, high fiber, high protein snack, I break out the celery sticks and slather them with peanut butter. When dining out, now I choose fresh or steamed vegetables instead of baked potato.

Prior to my diagnosis, I was feeling very tired and was only riding my mountain bike a couple of times per week or less. Now I am riding at least 4 days a week, often in excess of 100 miles. I have also made a lot of new riding buddies as I am riding more consistently and I look forward to the 35-45 mile rides with the big groups on the weekends. The more I ride, the better I feel.

I have lost a total of 55 pounds since joining the *ABCs of Diabetes*, and no longer have sleep apnea. I also have a much stronger desire to live my life to its fullest. With the noticeable weight loss over the period of 5 months I have had the opportunity to talk to others as they ask, “Are you okay? You have lost so much weight—are you trying to?” When I feel comfortable, it gives me an opportunity to explain my condition and encourage others to make small, healthy lifestyle changes. I meet so many other employees that are diabetic or prediabetic, who don’t know about the *ABCs of Diabetes* or think that changing their diets and lifestyles is too hard. I revel in the chance to explain that it can be done with slow, purposeful simple steps, which over time will result in dramatic changes in their overall wellness and satisfaction with life. So much of Type 2 diabetes can be managed with diet and exercise and the help of our wellness team. Thanks Janet, Jan, Jennifer, Debbie, Allison, and Betty.

~Michael Parr, Copier/Printer Support, Jim Miles Center

Watch for Hidden Sugar

You know that avoiding sugar is one key to maintaining your weight and your health. But do you know all the supposedly “healthy” foods that sugar can be hiding in? Be on the lookout for these hidden sources of unnecessary sugar in your diet:

- ☛ **Salad dressing.** A dressing that’s low-fat or fat-free can contain 5-7 grams of sugar per serving.
- ☛ **Flavored yogurt.** Yogurt may provide protein, but the fruity varieties often include up to 25 grams of sugar per 6-ounce serving. Buy plain yogurt and add your own fruit instead.
- ☛ **Pasta sauce.** Commercial pasta sauces frequently add sugar as a flavor enhancer. Skip those that list sugar among the first three ingredients.
- ☛ **Granola bars.** Oats, nuts, and dried fruits are all good, but the extra sugar added to most granola bars (along with trans fats) can undercut their nutritional value.

Deciphering Labels

It can be confusing to try to find out how much added sugar a food contains. The sugar listing on a Nutrition Facts label lumps all sugars together, including naturally-occurring milk and fruit sugars, which can be deceiving. Read the ingredients list and look for these words that indicate added sugars: white sugar, brown sugar, confectioner’s sugar, corn syrup, dextrin, honey, invert sugar, maple syrup, brown rice syrup, beet sugar, cane sugar, corn sweeteners, evaporated cane juice, high fructose corn syrup, malt, molasses, and turbinado sugar.



ABCs of Diabetes

The *ABCs of Diabetes* is a proactive course through the Wellness Program that provides educations, screenings, and discounts for diabetes supplies and prescriptions. Here are a few of the benefits ABCs of Diabetes participants enjoy:

Benefits:

- Free eye and foot exams
- Free lipid, HbA1c, kidney function, and blood pressure screenings—two times each year
- Free glucose monitor

Reduced Rx Copayments:

- Generic tier copay \$4* retail or mail order
 - Preferred tier copay \$37.50* mail order
 - Non-preferred tier copay \$62.50* mail order
- *90-day supply

**Save \$600
per year!**

- Medical Issues in Diabetes 11/03/11
- Nutrition & Exercise 11/10/11
- Advanced Diet Planning 12/01/11
- Hypertension & Heart Disease 12/08/11

Classes will be in the Palmetto Room at the Jim Miles Professional Building, 5204 US Highway 98 S, Lakeland. All classes start at 4:30 PM, and registration is required.

Diabetes Screening:

The next diabetes screening will be held Nov. 12, 2011 at Phillips, Salomon & Parrish, 4337 South Florida Avenue, Lakeland. Appointments are required.

Please email allison.sullins@polk-fl.net or call Allison Sullins, RD, LD/N at 648-3057 for more information or to schedule a diabetes screening appointment.

A Reason to Butt Out

By now, everyone knows that using tobacco is bad for your health; it damages your heart, lowers the amount of oxygen in your blood, raises your bad cholesterol and raises your blood pressure. But did you know that tobacco can increase the sugar levels in your blood and lead to insulin resistance? The more you smoke, the greater your risk for getting diabetes. In fact, the Mayo Clinic found that people who smoke more than a pack a day almost double their risk of developing diabetes. For those who already have diabetes and continue to use tobacco, quitting is essential to managing their condition.

Quitting tobacco is hard; if it weren't, you probably would have already done so. To prepare yourself, start making plans now. Set a quit date and tell your friends and family so that they can support your efforts. It's probably best not to set your quit date during a particularly stressful time, like the holidays. Start making small changes such as not smoking in the car or while you're on the phone. Next, choose a strategy. Some people have success quitting cold turkey, but most do not. You may try gradually tapering off the amount of tobacco that you use or you could try nicotine replacement therapies like patches, gum or lozenges. There are also prescription treatments that your doctor could discuss with you. The state of Florida provides a free telephonic QuitLine for residents – 1-877-U-CAN-NOW. If you think a group setting may work for you, try a 6-week Quit Smoking Now session facilitated by the Wellness Team. Classes are scheduled to begin in January 2012. Contact us at 648-3057 if you would like to see a class in your area. Regardless of the method you choose, the important thing is that you plan to quit!



Cancer Screenings Can SAVE Your Life!

On-site cancer and osteoporosis screenings are provided to you by the Polk County School Board (PCSB) Wellness Program in conjunction with Lakeland Regional Cancer Center (LRCC). This **FREE** benefit is available to all employees and spouses who have PCSB Blue Cross/Blue Shield health insurance. For an appointment, please contact the Cancer Screening Coordinator at each location at least two weeks prior to the screening date. There are no age restrictions for cancer and osteoporosis screenings on the LRCC screening bus.

NOVEMBER 2011

- 11/1 LENA VISTA EL
- 11/2 AUBURNDALE CENT.
- 11/4 PHILIP O'BRIEN EL
- 11/3 INWOOD EL
- 11/7 ALTA VISTA EL
- 11/8 JEWETT MID ACAD
- 11/9 PURCELL EL

- 11/14 CRYSTAL LAKE MID
- 11/15 NORTH LAKELAND EL
- 11/16 MULBERRY MID
- 11/17 WENDELL WATSON EL
- 11/18 LAKE GIBSON SR
- 11/28 TENOROC SR
- 11/29 GAUSE ACAD
- 11/30 HIGHLANDS GROVE EL

DECEMBER 2011

- 12/1 KINGSFORD EL
- 12/2 MEDULLA EL
- 12/5 BEN HILL GRIFFIN EL
- 12/6 MULBERRY SR
- 12/7 POLK CITY EL
- 12/8 DAVENPORT SOTA
- 12/12 PADGETT EL
- 12/13 DANIEL JENKINS ACAD

Get On The Bus!