

November is Diabetes Month: here are three steps to protect your health



By Wil Yu,
General Manager, CCA
Health California

November is Diabetes Month, a time to focus on managing and preventing a disease that affects about 37 million Americans.

While the medical community has made great strides in understanding and managing the disease, rates are unlikely to decrease. This calls for a closer focus on preventative care through simple, straightforward steps.

According to the American Diabetes Association, in 2019, 11% of the population had diabetes.

Additionally, nearly two million Americans have type 1 diabetes, including about 244,000 children and adolescents.

While drugs and treatments have advanced, diet and lifestyle trends for many Americans have worsened, contributing to a growing population with the disease. Research from the National Clinical Care Commission showed that in 2018, an estimated 1.5 million new cases of diabetes were diagnosed among people aged 18 and older in the U.S. Many of these new cases were preventable.

This is the heartbreaking reality of healthcare in

the U.S. today, and it's a complex problem to solve. The government, farming community and nutrition experts, and healthcare companies each have an important part to play to improve outcomes. Healthy food needs to be less expensive, there is a housing crisis in many areas of America, and not everyone lives in a community where it's possible to walk instead of drive everywhere.

But there are simple steps that everyone can take when it comes to prevention.

Know your risk—at the local level

In California, one in six adults over the age of 65 has type 2 diabetes. Santa Clara County is home to a diverse population, with over 50% identifying as non-Caucasian. We know that diabetes is higher in ethnic and racial minorities, with Hispanic and African Americans twice as likely to have and die from the disease, and non-obese Vietnamese Americans having 60% higher adjusted odds of diabetes

compared to non-obese non-Hispanic whites.

Although the likelihood of getting diabetes increases with age, diagnoses are also happening young and younger. On the positive side, the youngest generation in the family may often have the newest and best health education, and they can use that to their advantage. Encourage each member of the family to keep up with regular, preventative check-ups, explore healthy eating options, and discuss ways to stay at a healthy weight with their doctor. Genetics can affect risk levels as well, so be sure to obtain a clear family history. The CDC offers a simple online quiz to help assess your risk level, accessible at tinyurl.com/cddiabetestest.

Consider your holistic health picture.

Seek out clinicians who offer customized care, not a one-size-fits-all model. Make sure you have a clinician you trust and feel comfortable discussing the hard questions, especially around prevention and care. If you feel like your

care is rushed or you're not being heard, find another doctor.

Seek out help in your community (beyond the doctor's office).

Often you can find community health centers that offer assistance such as food banks with healthy food options or mobile farmers markets, disease-specific education programs, or exercise classes. Many of these resources are free regardless of insurance to anyone in need.

Several of the macro reasons for the diabetes crisis stem from outdated approaches from government, healthcare companies, and other legacy systems. However, taking these seemingly small yet significant steps can dramatically improve your health outlook, and save you and your family unnecessary suffering.

References:

tinyurl.com/americanidiabetesassn
tinyurl.com/clinicalcarecommission

Dinah challenges you to unplug for a day

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I am old enough to know the Dewey Decimal System, how to look things up in the encyclopedia, and how to think critically. Are these skills obsolete in the wake of this technological era?

Another obsolete skill: counting back change. Point of sale and online payment systems have evolved to make it so cashiers no longer have to know how to give change. Credit card, Venmo, Paypal... Much quicker. And in today's society, we want it done fast.

Keep an eye on those hidden fees and who's profiting off our desire for ease and speed. So easy to let the computer take care of our money with auto pay, pre-pay, and the list goes on.

Even when we are out

in nature, it's rare that someone doesn't have their phone in hand, ready to snap a photo to be shared.

Has this taken our humanity away or dialed it way down? Are we too busy with apps, sites, blogs and so on, to appreciate this area with a grateful attitude?

There's a balance between being grateful for all the world's knowledge at our fingertips, yet able to give ourselves a time out. Now that we can get out, let's get out. Let's be fully present with each other, which means putting down the device.

I challenge you to leave the phone at home. Whether it's for an hour, half a day, or all day—one day each week. This is freedom.

No app usage, no emojis, no Googling it, no spell check, no photos or videos. A day without the

current extended brain. Can you do it?

Personal experience tells me this is harder than you may think.

Put the phone down and be grateful for what all we have without it! A note pad and a pencil or pen could be helpful to get through it.

I challenge you. Is it possible? Can you take this unplugged free time to appreciate and be truly grateful for the exceptional natural beauty in our community?

Put down that device! Smile and be kind to your server, street worker, and road rage driver. Stop, exhale, give back the air in your lungs. Now, slowly take in a deep breath, this oxygen is delicious.

Turn up the volume on your listening abilities. What do you hear? The calming sounds of nature abound. Open your mind to being here now and



Photo by Brigitte Tohm on Unsplash

appreciating this moment.

The short-circuit thinking of the cell phone always having the answer allows our brain to atrophy. Let's not allow ourselves to be

so preoccupied with the instant answer that we forget to be present for the journey.