NOVEMBER IS AMERICAN DIABETES MONTH

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is working with other local organizations to increase community awareness of the prevalence and prevention of diabetes in Santa Barbara County during the month of November which is American Diabetes Month.

Nationally, 23 million people in the United States have type 2 diabetes which is associated with obesity. Diabetes has increased dramatically in recent years among children and adults, as obesity has increased. Locally, about 6% of adults in Santa Barbara County were diagnosed with diabetes in 2007. Diabetes was the 9th leading cause of death in Santa Barbara County that year. Further, diabetes related deaths were almost twice as common among Latinos.

Untreated diabetes can cause serious health problems. Diabetes doubles the risk of heart attack. It can create vision problems, and lead to blindness. Diabetes may cause kidney disease that requires dialysis. And diabetes can cause severe circulation problems in the legs and feet that may require partial amputation. “This is a very serious health problem that people need to be aware of and take action to prevent,” stated Dr. Takashi Wada, County Health Officer and Director of Public Health.

Type 2 diabetes can be prevented by maintaining a healthy weight and getting regular physical activity. Eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables, and being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day can help prevent diabetes. Dr. Andria Ruth with the Diabetes Resource Center explained, “Studies have shown that obese patients who lost as little as 5-7% of their body weight and exercised at least five times a week were able to prevent the development of type 2 diabetes.”

Local organizations like Sansum Diabetes Research Institute, the Diabetes Resource Center, Sansum Clinics, Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, Marian Medical Center, and the Public Health Department are actively addressing the prevention and treatment of diabetes. Many of these organizations offer free or low-cost classes on the treatment and prevention of diabetes.

The Public Health Department has produced new Healthy for Life/Una Vida Saludable television shows on diabetes prevention and treatment that will be broadcast countywide in November and December on Cox channels 20 and 21 in south county and on Comcast channel 23 in central and north county. The shows will also be posted on the Public Health Department website at www.countyofsb.org/phd/healthed.aspx?id=20746.

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