

Weight loss can decrease risk of Type 2 diabetes

Written by

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In Minnesota, nearly 300,000 adults have Type 2 diabetes, and as many as 1.4 million Minnesotans have prediabetes. Most do not know it. Of those estimated to have prediabetes, only about 1 in 6 people even know they have the condition.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines prediabetes as a serious health condition that increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Having a family history of diabetes, such as a mother, father, brother or sister with type 2 diabetes, puts Minnesotans at greater risk for developing type 2 diabetes. During National Diabetes Month, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is calling attention to the small, but important steps families can take together to delay or prevent type 2 diabetes.

MDH works with local partners to offer a community-based, lifestyle change program for people with prediabetes. I CAN Prevent Diabetes! is one of the names used in Minnesota for the National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP) – a curriculum constructed on research that found that people who lost a modest amount of weight through dietary changes and increased physical activity reduced their chances of developing diabetes by 58% over a three year period.

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Jill Petty entered Minnesota's I CAN Prevent Diabetes, through The Stairstep Foundation . Petty's risks were high. Along with a family history of diabetes and being overweight, she is also African American. African Americans are at an even higher risk for this serious chronic condition.

"I never put my health first, or even second." Petty says. "It always came behind work, kids, church and other activities."

Mrs. Petty and her husband Rev. William Petty are two of 207 participants who have completed the I CAN Prevent Diabetes! program through the Stairstep Foundation. To date, Stairstep has trained 25 lifestyle coaches who direct the program at nine churches across Minneapolis and St. Paul.

"Stairstep's implementation of I CAN Prevent Diabetes! is a stellar example of how building programs in specific community settings can make a meaningful impact," says Gretchen Taylor, Director of the Diabetes Program at MDH. "With NDPP programs like I CAN Prevent Diabetes! in more than 30 communities throughout the state you can see how the potential positive effect can multiply."



Rev. and Mrs. Petty have both lost over 20 pounds, substantially reducing their risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The couple attributes their success to being in the program together, weekly meetings with support from other participants, learning about healthier food choices and portion control, and convenient ways to increase physical activity.

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“MDH’s goal is to increase awareness of prediabetes, while helping people make positive changes to reduce their risk. We believe the way you do that is to do what works in people’s lives. Stairstep Foundation facilitates an ecumenical collaboration of African American churches called His Works United, that escape territorial issues and work together to confront key issues of the community. The diabetes prevention program is beginning to be effectively presented in the African American community through the trusted institution of the African American church. Having the right tools, in the right place, at the right time is an important part of staying healthy.” States Alfred Babington-Johnson, CEO of Stairstep Foundation and Convener of His Works United.

Learn more about prediabetes, the I CAN Prevent Diabetes program, and the resources available through MDH at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/diabetes/>.

The NDPP is a public-private partnership of community organizations, private insurers, employers, health care organizations, and government agencies. These partners are working to establish local evidence-based lifestyle change programs for people at high risk for type 2 diabetes. <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/>

The Stairstep Foundation believes that restoration of a spirit of community requires intentional approaches to encourage people to act as if they believe they belong together. Therefore, Stairstep has pressed forward to: Understand the components, processes, and dynamics required to revive a spirit of community; Provoke discussion and encourage others to embrace community building as a priority agenda item; Create and document replicable models and strategies that build community. <http://www.stairstep.org/>. For more information or to enroll in a Stairstep sponsored program, call Sylvia Amos, Director of Programs at 612-521-3110.