



Staying active can reduce diabetes risk in adulthood

Sorting out the causes of type 2 diabetes continues to challenge medical researchers. Previously called adult-onset diabetes, type 2 is showing up more and more often in younger people. Very recently it was reported that early signs of diabetes are being found in obese toddlers.

The main challenge in diabetes research is that many things come together to cause the disease.

Question: What do researchers consider to be the main causes of diabetes?

Answer: There are both uncontrollable and controllable factors that increase the risk of developing diabetes. Uncontrollable factors include a family history of the disease and belonging to a higher-risk ethnic population -- Pacific Islander, African American, Latino, Asian American or American Indian. Risk also increases with age.

Important controllable risk factors include obesity and in-

activity.

Q: What can people do to avoid diabetes even if there is a family history?

A: Without a doubt, staying physically active, not just busy, may be the most important way to reduce the risk. Even those who are overweight have much less risk of developing diabetes if they stay physically active and accumulate at least 30 to 60 minutes of moderately intense physical activity on most days of the week. This can include brisk walking, swimming, jogging, bike riding, etc.

Research indicates exercise does not need to be done in a single bout. Being active for 10 minutes a few times a day is also beneficial.

Q: Is there a perfect diet to prevent diabetes?

A: No, but a varied diet that helps maintain a healthy body weight is the goal. The diet should include adequate protein and carbohydrate and be moderate in fat content.

A recent study conducted in Finland on more than 4,000 men and women found that those who ate more whole-grain foods had a lower incidence of diabetes than those who ate more refined grain products. The researchers believe whole-grain fiber made the difference. They did not see the same protection when the fiber in the diet came from fruits and vegetables.

Because the average American consumes only about one whole-grain serving per day, it is important to find easy substitutions. For example, try a whole-grain breakfast cereal. Use whole-grain or whole-wheat bread for sandwiches, and choose brown rice more often or cook a mixture of brown and white rice together.

Making good food choices most of the time and staying physically active throughout life may greatly reduce the risk of developing diabetes.

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