

Type 2 diabetes: Culturally-tailored education can improve blood sugar control

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Using community-based health advocates, delivering information within same-gender groups or adapting dietary and lifestyle advice to fit a particular community's likely diet can help people with type 2 diabetes control their blood sugar levels, certainly for up to six months, following health education. This conclusion was reached by a team of Cochrane Researchers after they considered the data in 11 trials that involved 1,603 people.

Type 2 diabetes is a particular problem for minority ethnic groups who originate from developing countries, but live in upper-middle income or high income countries. These people tend to have low socio-economic status and find that they are faced with many physical, communication and cultural barriers that make it difficult to access healthcare effectively.

The Cochrane Researchers found 11 trials where people had deliberately tried to overcome cultural barriers. In short-term studies, culturally appropriate health education programs led to improved blood-sugar control within 3 months. This benefit was still seen when the 6-month trial periods ended. Knowledge about diabetes and healthy lifestyles also improved over this time period. One-year later, however, the benefits had not been sustained.

"These are important and encouraging results. They show that providing culturally tailored information can help people control their diabetes." says Kamila Hawthorne, who works at the Department of Primary Care

and Public Health at the University of Cardiff, UK.

"Diabetes is a chronic condition and complications can develop over many years. We now need to carry out longer term studies with larger groups, all measuring the same results, to discover which type of assistance is most useful and see how to keep the benefits running for longer," says Hawthorne.

Source: Wiley

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