

US doctors, CDC join forces in new diabetes prevention effort

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Getting the millions of Americans at risk for type 2 tested is the first step, experts say

(HealthDay)—Reducing the number of Americans with type 2 diabetes is a new mission shared by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the leading U.S. health agency, officials said Thursday.

"Our health care system cannot sustain the growing number of people developing diabetes," Ann Albright, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's division of diabetes translation, said during a morning news conference announcing the partnership.

More than 86 million Americans are living with prediabetes, the precursor to [type 2 diabetes](#), but nearly 90 percent don't know it, the CDC said.

"That's one in every three people. This isn't just a concern—it's a crisis," AMA President Dr. Robert Wah said during the news conference.

Untreated, type 2 diabetes can lead to kidney disease, amputations and vision loss. The chronic disease, associated with being overweight and sedentary, has increased alongside the U.S. obesity epidemic.

The new program's goal is to make doctors aware that they should order blood tests to screen their patients for prediabetes, and refer these borderline patients to diabetes prevention programs.

Lifestyle changes that involve healthy eating, weight loss and physical activity can help delay or prevent the debilitating disease, experts said.

"Research shows that screening, testing and referring people who are at risk for prediabetes is critical," added Albright. "Research also shows that when people know they have prediabetes they are more likely to take action."

The new program is called Prevent Diabetes STAT (Screen, Test, Act Today).

Diabetes costs more than \$245 billion each year in [health care](#) spending and reduced productivity, Wah said.

Albright explained that prediabetes occurs when blood sugar levels are higher than normal "but not yet high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes."

"Research shows that 15 to 30 percent of overweight people with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes within five years unless they take steps to prevent or delay its onset by making important [lifestyle changes](#)," she said.

People in diabetes prevention programs can work with a lifestyle coach and others in similar straits to identify how to make realistic changes in their lives, she said.

"This is a model that has proven to delay or prevent the development of type 2 diabetes," Albright said.

The medical association has already partnered with the YMCA to help prevent type 2 diabetes and heart disease, Wah said. A program launched in 2013 aimed to increase the number of doctors screening patients and referring them to [diabetes prevention](#) programs.

Currently, more than 500 of these programs exist around the country, he said. Over the next several years, health officials would like to see these programs expand nationwide.

"The YMCAs that adopted the CDC program are 70 percent effective in helping people 60 years and older prevent converting from prediabetes to [diabetes](#)," Wah said. "We are hoping to scale this up across the country."

More information: For more on type 2 diabetes, visit the [American Medical Association](#).

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