

HEALTH AWARENESS

Latino Communities Partner For Diabetes Prevention

(NAPSA)—Latino communities have come together to help reverse a troubling trend: About 2.5 million, or 9.5 percent of Hispanic and Latino adults in the United States, may have diabetes, a much higher rate than non-Hispanic white adults.

In one community, Latino families now participate in a research program called Diabetes and the Family. The initiative teaches people with diabetes to control their disease, and it works with parents, children, siblings and other relatives to help loved ones with diabetes. It also teaches people without diabetes ways to avoid the disease altogether. Family members set goals together and encourage each other to eat right and be active.

The program is run through the University of Arizona's Southwest Center for Community Health. The center is a Prevention Research Center, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It works to eliminate health problems such as diabetes and obesity that disproportionately affect many Latino communities.

"To do health promotion with the Latino community, you need to focus on the family," said Guadalupe Ayala, Ph.D., research director at the San Diego Prevention Research Center, which leads the Prevention Research Centers' Latino Health Network. "When you have multiple generations involved, the more the better."

Dr. Ayala said Latinos in the United States, especially recent immigrants, face challenges to staying healthy. They often lack access to adequate housing or medical care, and they work to support



Latino families are helping each other control diabetes.

family members in other countries.

"Physical activity becomes a low priority," she said. "And it shouldn't. We need to take care of ourselves if we want to take care of other people."

The San Diego center is studying ways to increase physical activity in a California-Mexico border town, such as creating walking clubs for adults and soccer leagues for children who cannot afford community leagues.

Each of CDC's 33 Prevention Research Centers involves a community in every aspect of research and program design. Once the programs are tested, they can be shared with similar communities.

In Chicago, another Prevention Research Center is training residents of a largely Latino neighborhood, where rates of inactivity, obesity and diabetes are high, to be Healthy Living Coaches who visit churches, schools and work sites to teach diabetes prevention.

Dr. Ayala said there is hope for Latinos' health. "You can start at any time," she said. "The barriers are not insurmountable."

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/prc.