

Diabetes: Understanding This All-Too-Common Disease

(NAPSA)—At the turn of the century, diabetes was a relatively rare disease. Today, it is the fifth most common cause of death—contributing to more than 200,000 deaths annually. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 18.2 million Americans have the condition, while another 20 million have “pre-diabetes,” a metabolic abnormality that can eventually lead to the full-blown version. Diabetes is on the rise—up nearly 49 percent in the last decade alone. Perhaps most alarming is that many aren’t even aware they have it.

“Diabetes is a chronic, progressive, incurable disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life,” explains Pharmacist Sarah Matunis, R.Ph. “The cause of diabetes continues to be a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles.”

Diabetes comes in two forms: the less-common type 1, caused when the body mistakenly attacks the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas; and type 2, which results from a combination of decreased insulin production in the pancreas and a decreased response from the body’s cells to insulin (insulin resistance). Type 2 affects 90-95 percent of those with diabetes and is becoming more common in people of all ages as the rates of obesity reach epidemic proportions.

Discovering Diabetes

Diabetes is a silent killer. By practicing good health habits and by living a healthy lifestyle, you can lessen your risk of developing diabetes and possibly slow its progression. The development and



progression of diabetes can be lessened or prevented. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent most of the dire complications. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends that adults be screened starting at age 45, with follow-up tests every three years. Those with risk factors—such as having a family history of the disease; being of African American or Latino descent; being overweight; having high cholesterol or high blood pressure; and smoking—may require earlier, more frequent testing.

Sounding the Alert

The American Diabetes Association and Rite Aid Corporation want to help identify the undiagnosed and those at risk by educating people about diabetes risk factors and warning signs. In all Rite Aid stores throughout the country, people can learn more about this disease and take a simple diabetes risk test. To learn more about diabetes, talk with your Rite Aid pharmacist or visit www.riteaiddiabetes.com.

“Left untreated, diabetes can be deadly. Risk tests will help people recognize and act on any diabetes risk factors and warning signs they might discover,” added Matunis. “For millions of Americans, their lives might depend on it.”