

Health Matters

Wellness Out West (WOW)



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THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE IN TYPE 2 DIABETES

Type 2 diabetes mellitus is a metabolic disorder in which the amount of blood glucose is too high because the body cannot use insulin effectively, a condition known as insulin resistance. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas that aids the cells in absorbing glucose and converting it to energy. Initially, the pancreas produces more insulin in an attempt to keep blood glucose levels normal but eventually it is unable to produce enough.

Type 2 diabetes is associated with dysfunction and failure of various organs. Those affected suffer from neuropathy, kidney disease, eye disease and peripheral arterial disease.

The development of cardiovascular disease including heart attack, heart failure and stroke brings the greatest risk of death among people with type 2 diabetes. The increased risks of these complications are reported to be up to 400% greater than in a person who doesn't have diabetes. A quarter of those people newly diagnosed with diabetes already have cardiovascular disease.

The increasing worldwide prevalence of obesity and a sedentary lifestyle are directly linked to the rising rate of type 2 diabetes. Exercise is an important lifestyle intervention that can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

Two other conditions that precede the development of diabetes may also be prevented or delayed by regular activity:

Pre-Diabetes is a metabolic condition that is between normal glucose levels and diabetes

Metabolic syndrome, which markedly increases the risk of developing diabetes, is also associated with insulin resistance.

Physical activity is a cornerstone treatment for the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes. Recent studies have found that among people at risk of diabetes, a lifestyle programme that includes moderate intensity exercise of at least 30 minutes every day reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by over 50%.

In comparison, the use of drug therapy reduces the incidence of diabetes by only about 30%. Though most research studies have shown the benefits of exercise for controlling blood glucose levels, exercise training also improves cardiovascular health in people with diabetes.

Some studies suggested that at least one death per year could be prevented for every 60 people who would walk at least 2 hours per week, a goal that should be attainable by most people. Prepared by Kay Lindley, Green Prescription Area Manager.

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