**Word count 769**

**2017 01.03 Health Matters**

**What is Prediabetes?**

**Joe**

**This is Health Matters, reporting on prediabetes. What it is, and what it means long term.**

**Kristen**

**Prediabetes is not an illness. It didn’t even exist as a concept until the past decade or so. Prediabetes is a condition of elevated blood sugar levels – levels that are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. These days testing blood sugar levels is a standard assessment when blood work has been prescribed by your doctor.**

**Taushauna**

**You can even take a quick test online for prediabetes. The American Diabetes Association recommends taking the online test if you’re over sixty. It’s a simple way of finding out if you’re at risk for this condition.**

**Joe**

**Blood sugar levels that exceed a particular standard are considered prediabetic. But these levels do not cause organ damage. Or even symptoms for that matter. A prediabetes diagnosis is basically a warning. An alert system for letting you know that your blood sugar levels put you at risk for developing diabetes. Not everyone who has been diagnosed as prediabetic will develop diabetes. Statistically, however, people classified as prediabetic have a 15 to 30 percent chance of having full blown diabetes within five years.**

**Kristen**

**The risk, by the way, is higher in older people who have been diagnosed as prediabetic. The reason the risk is higher for older people is because of weight issues and a general tendency to be less active. The good news is that the risk of developing diabetes can be reversed or delayed. Which is why the Centers for Disease Control initiated the National Diabetes Prevention Program in 2012.**

**Taushona**

**This national prevention program is now offered in every state. Often at multiple sites. The program offers two main correctives for people who have prediabetic blood sugar levels -- improved diet and regular, active exercise. There’s nothing new about these correctives. In fact, there can’t be many people these days who are unaware that lack of exercise and poor diet lead to diabetes and other serious health problems.**

**Joe**

**True. But knowing this doesn’t necessarily lead to doing something about it. Which is why the National Diabetes Prevention Program is considered an innovative public health initiative. It’s a preventive care program than is already showing impressive results. Offered at various local health centers, the program assesses people for prediabetes. And develops a concrete diet and exercise plan for individuals to follow. Participants attend weekly sessions for guidance and measurement of their progress. Plus they receive support when they’re having trouble with following through on their plan. Oversight and guidance are truly important aspects of changing the habits that, over time, led to the prediabetic condition.**

**Taushona**

**What about the online test for prediabetes? Is that a helpful tool?**

**Kristen**

**If nothing else, it’s a wake-up call. The website is called** [**doihaveprediabetes.org**](https://doihaveprediabetes.org/) **The on-line test asks about family history, medical history, height and weight. It also asks whether or not you’re physically active. In other words, the test assesses basic history and life style conditions known to be associated with diabetes. Based on that information, the feedback is very often a warning that the test taker should see their doctor. More than 80 percent of Americans over 60 who take the online test receive a warning that they might be prediabetic.**

**Joe**

**Critics of the online survey claim that the test identifies almost every older person as likely to have prediabetes. And they claim that this is inaccurate. Even overkill. But defenders of the test insist that the website is a coordinated national prevention effort that is working. Type 2 diabetes has become a major public health problem. To reverse this serious trend, a far-reaching, proactive approach to preventing diabetes is warranted. Especially because prediabetes can be reversed when people become aware of the risk their lifestyle poses.**

**Taushona**

**Defenders also point out that the National Diabetes Prevention Initiative offers a new approach to diet. It’s not diet with a capital D, where you have to count calories and feel deprived. Rather, people diagnosed with prediabetes are taught to make better choices about what they eat. They’re taught what foods raise blood sugar levels, and are given options that taste good and provide general health benefits.**

**Joe**

**Health Matters is a production of KIDE Hoopa CA.  Produced and written by Cynthia Poten. Engineered by Joseph Orozco.  Our readers were Kristen Marshall, David Moon and Joseph Orozco.  For this audio and more information, visit our download area at  www.kidefm.org. Thank you for listening. Your health adds to the health of our community.**

**Sources and Links**

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