Health Talk: November is American Diabetes Month

Donna King (DK): Welcome to Health Talk - a feature of the Orange County Health Department's Health e-Radio series. I'm your host, Donna King, Director of Health Promotion and Education Services for the Orange County Health Department. November is American Diabetes Month. The Health Department is taking time to promote awareness of type 2 diabetes. Today, we're going to talk with Renée Kemske, Registered Dietitian for the Orange County Health Department. We're going to talk about prevention and management of type 2 diabetes. We're going to explore risk factors, warning signs and steps to prevention. We're going to also highlight a great program, open to adults who have type 2 diabetes and want to learn how to manage it.

DK: Welcome Renée.

Renée Kemske (RK): Hi Donna.

DK: To begin our discussion, can you tell us a little bit about what type 2 diabetes is?

RK: Diabetes is a disease where your body cannot use enough insulin or use insulin well enough to control the amount of glucose (or sugar) in the blood. This results in too much sugar in the blood or hyperglycemia.

DK: Can we prevent type 2 diabetes?

RK: There are many factors that cause diabetes. We can take several steps to help prevent or delay the onset of diabetes, such as healthy lifestyle changes. These include things such as eating healthier, being physically active, achieving a healthy weight, and reducing stress.

DK: What would be some common signs or symptoms associated with type 2 diabetes?

RK: Common symptoms would are things such as frequent urination, excessive thirst, excessive hunger, unusual weight loss, fatigue, and blurry vision. Sometimes though, people have no symptoms at all.

DK: So Renée, what types of things or factors would place a person at risk for type 2 diabetes?

RK: Well Donna, there are several factors that put a person at risk. If they have family members - particularly if they have a mother, father, brother or sister with type 2 diabetes - that puts them at a higher risk. If you are overweight, that makes it harder on your body to keep blood sugar down. Certain ethnicities are at a higher risk, African Americans and the Latino population. If they had diabetes when they were pregnant; pre-diabetes; or as we get older it's just harder for our bodies to work properly.

DK: For a person who has been diagnosed and knows they have type 2 diabetes, is there anything that he or she can do to keep it in check?

RK: Absolutely! There are several things a person with diabetes can do to keep their blood sugars under control. We usually call this "Managing Your Diabetes with the M&Ms Plan." This isn't the candy; these are the steps to help with management:

- Meal Planning
- Motion Planning
- Medication management
- Monitoring your blood sugar
- Measuring your risk – meaning going and having your annual check-ups that you need to keep your diabetes in check
- Managing stress
- and then working with your Medical team.

DK: Great, now I understand that the Orange County Health Department has a program for adults that have type 2 diabetes. It's a little lengthy in title so let me give it a shot. Tell us about Diabetes Self-Management Education Program and why a person with diabetes would want to join this class.

RK: Well research shows that people with diabetes who take what we call a DSME program have improved knowledge of diabetes, improved self-care behaviors (so, they're better able to make the right choices to help manage their diabetes and ask their medical providers when they have a questions), then they also tend to have better blood sugars and overall quality of life. Our program is under the NC Diabetes Recognition Program. It involves 10 hours of education where the person meets with a nurse or Registered Dietitian for an initial health assessment then attends 8 hours of group education looking at general management, monitoring blood sugar, nutrition, physical activity, and preventing complications.

DK: Renée, thank you so much for your time and information that you've shared with us today. Are there any final thoughts or comments?

RK: Even though diabetes is a very serous disease, there are several things that a person can do to help keep themselves in control. Please take advantage of some of the resources we have in this community.

DK: This concludes our podcast on type 2 diabetes prevention and management. For more information about this topic, please visit the Orange County Health Department's web page at www.orangecountync.gov/health.