



# spotlight on health

## The Importance Of Learning More About A Growing Epidemic

(NAPSA)—By learning the facts about diabetes, Americans can take the necessary steps to manage the disease and live longer, healthier lives.

Type 2 diabetes was recently labeled as a growing epidemic in the United States by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Approximately 16 million Americans have diabetes, 90 to 95 percent of whom have type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is a disease in which the body fails to make enough or properly use insulin, a condition called insulin resistance. If left unmanaged, type 2 diabetes can lead to debilitating and life-threatening complications, including heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and limb loss.

The majority of people with diabetes are over the age of 40 and approximately 80 percent are considered overweight. In addition, type 2 diabetes disproportionately affects certain ethnic populations. In fact, both Hispanics and African-Americans are nearly twice as likely than Caucasians to develop type 2 diabetes and are more likely to be insulin resistant. Both groups also experience a higher rate of complications associated with type 2 diabetes, specifically heart disease, blindness, kidney disease and limb loss.

The American Diabetes Association underscores that patient education is a vital component of a proper diabetes management program. People with diabetes can learn and practice the skills necessary to better control blood sugar levels, and, therefore, reduce their risk for long-term complications.

Those with type 2 diabetes should be encouraged to:

- Eat small, high-fiber meals throughout the day to stabilize their blood sugar levels.

- Engage in consistent physical activity, as weight loss may help to lower blood sugar levels. Even modest activity, like taking stairs instead of elevators or park-

### Common Symptoms of Type 2 Diabetes Include:

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Repeated or slow-healing infections
- Blurred vision
- Tingling or loss of feeling in hands or feet.



ing further away from the store, can be beneficial.

- Take an A<sub>1C</sub> test at least twice a year. A<sub>1C</sub> is a test that shows if blood sugar levels are controlled over time. Individuals with type 2 diabetes should aim for a target percentage of under seven percent, as an A<sub>1C</sub> level of eight or greater means that changes need to be made to get blood sugar levels under better control.

- Talk to their doctor and healthcare team about appropriate medication options. For example, there are medications that directly target insulin resistance, an underlying cause of the disease.

In addition to ethnicity, additional risk factors for type 2 diabetes include:

- Family history of diabetes
- Being over the age of 45
- Obesity
- Lack of regular physical activity
- Low HDL cholesterol or high triglycerides
- Women who have had gestational diabetes or a baby weighing more than nine pounds at birth.

If you are experiencing symptoms or think you are at risk for type 2 diabetes, speak to your physician. If you have type 2 diabetes, develop or continue a good relationship with your healthcare team and take charge of your disease.

As the number of cases of type 2 diabetes continues to increase, people young and old, particularly Hispanics and African-Americans, need to know the facts about diabetes and take the necessary steps to manage the disease and live longer, healthier lives.