

St. Luke's Hospital Diabetes Education Program
Helps With Positive Change for Better Health
By Melissa Melum and Buffy Ashmore

Polk Fit, Fresh and Friendly is committed to supporting the wellness of all our Polk County citizens. Whether you've been diagnosed with pre-diabetes or Type 2 Diabetes, self-management is an important component of your wellness, and PF3 coalition member St. Luke's Hospital offers programs tailored to your specific diagnosis and lifestyle needs.

It is well known that both pre- diabetes and Type 2 diabetes are growing medical problems that carry significant risks for associated health issues including kidney disease, eye disease and cardiovascular disease. According to the Center for Disease Control's 2017 National Diabetes Statistics Report, more than 25% of Americans aged 65 or older have diabetes. Approximately 84 million people, more than 1 out of 3 people have pre-diabetes. Of those with the disease, 90% do not know they have it.

A diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes can be challenging for many people because of the fear of complications and confusion about how to manage the illness. It is a complex and frequently misunderstood illness that is nonetheless controllable, and control of diabetes and associated conditions such as high blood pressure and abnormal lipid levels drives down the risks of complications. In addition, you can have prediabetes for years with no clear symptoms. Many times it will go undetected until more serious health problems arise, such as Type 2 diabetes.

Managing diabetes involves lifestyle change in conjunction with meaningful blood glucose monitoring and communication with a health care provider about medication approaches. Yet, according to CDC's 2017 statistics report, more than 60% of American adults diagnosed with diabetes are obese or severely obese and more than 40% got less than 10 minutes per week of moderate or vigorous physical activity. Moderate weight loss and exercise can go a long way toward controlling diabetes and decreasing related risks.

Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) programs are designed to help people understand diabetes and how to manage the illness for improved medical outcome. Accredited DSME programs are patient-centered, focusing on individualized goal setting and problem solving, ideally with ongoing Diabetes Self-Management Support (DSMS) options to help people sustain and continue making positive changes.

St. Luke's Hospital offers a Diabetes Self-Management Education program that is accredited by the American Association of Diabetes Educators and provided by Melissa Melum, RN, CDE, a certified diabetes educator. The core program consists of two 3-hour informal, discussion-oriented class sessions followed by two or more 1:1 in-person and/or telephone follow-up meetings in which participants review blood glucose logs and set goals. Ongoing follow-up and support is provided as needed.

A diagnosis of pre-diabetes can be just as confusing as a diabetes diagnosis. Many disregard the diagnosis and ignore the symptoms. It is estimated that those that do not incorporate a lifestyle change program will develop Type 2 diabetes within 5 years. Studies show that for people diagnosed with pre-diabetes, incorporating a structured lifestyle change program, losing 5% to 7 % body weight and exercising at least 150 minutes per week can reduce their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by 58%.

The National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) is a CDC recognized lifestyle change program developed to assist those with a pre-diabetes diagnosis. It offers a CDC approved curriculum with lessons and handouts, a lifestyle coach specially trained to lead the program and a support group of people with similar goals and challenges. These key program components are essential to the success of each participant.

St. Luke's offers a Diabetes Prevention Program that is currently FREE to anyone in the community diagnosed with pre-diabetes. The program requires a year-long time commitment of weekly meetings for the first 16 weeks of the program, and monthly meetings thereafter. It is led by Buffy Ashmore, BS, CHES, ACSM, a certified diabetes lifestyle coach.

Each of these St. Luke's program have collaborative relationships with other providers in the community to provide ongoing support activities. Nancy Chapman, RD, LDN, St. Luke's dietitian, provides individual consultations with patients from the DSME program as needed. Also, Jimmi Buell, Family and Consumer Science Agent at the Polk County Extension Service, Nancy Chapman and Melissa Melum provide ongoing support programs focusing on meal planning and diet. Other support programs have included: Making the Most of Doctor's Visit with Amy Marietta, MD, Medical Director of Polk Health Center, Growing Vegetables in Small Spaces with Scott Welborn, Polk County Agricultural Extension Agent, and Winter Exercise with Hanna Nguyen, DPT, Physical Therapist at St. Luke's Hospital.

Participation in the St. Luke's DSME program requires a referral from the participant's medical provider, and the provider receives detailed communication after the educator's meetings with participants. Participation in the St. Luke's DPP does not require a referral. Anyone can participate in the DPP as long as they have had a pre-diabetes diagnosis, are age 18+ and have never been diagnosed with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes.

For more information about these programs or to request a brochure or referral form, please call the St. Luke's Hospital Diabetes Program at 828-894-0944.

For more information on Polk Fit Fresh and Friendly, including our work in the community and a list of our meeting dates, please visit our website at www.polkfitfreshandfriendly.org.

