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Reducing the risk of diabetes: Putting prevention strategies into practice

A free seminar, "Pursuing Prevention: Reducing the Risk of Diabetes," for those who are living with or supporting individuals and families affected by diabetes, will take place from 2-3 p.m. Friday, March 30. The event, which is sponsored by The Sarasota County Wellness Coalition, will be held at the Laurel/Nokomis School Media Center, 1900 E. Laurel Road, Nokomis.

Health professionals including physicians, counselors, dietitians, nurses and individuals in school, medical and other settings are encouraged to attend.

The speaker is Linh Gordon, a registered nurse who is a certified diabetic educator with Sarasota Memorial Health Care System. She will address a range of topics, including the risk factors associated with diabetes, and its burden to the health and well-being of affected individuals and families as well as to schools and the community at large.

"The bigger focus of Ms. Gordon's presentation is on prevention strategies, including the role of proper nutrition and physical activity along with realistic goal setting," says Sarasota County Wellness Coalition Chair and School Health Nurse Supervisor Linda Glover.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), diabetes is becoming more common in the United States. From 1980 through 2010, the number of Americans with diagnosed diabetes has more than tripled (from 5.6 million to 20.9 million).

"Diabetes has a profound effect on the health of our community," says Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) Director Kari Ellingstad. A Sarasota County Community Health Survey released last year by CHIP revealed that the percentage of people identifying themselves as diabetic increased from 8.7 percent in 2006 to 10 percent in 2010. At the same time, a growing number of people reported not having access to medical care due to financial reasons, including lack of health insurance.

Complications from diabetes can lead to blindness and kidney disease. More than half of the lower-extremity amputations occur in people with diabetes. Persons living with diabetes also are at significantly increased risk for high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, pregnancy complications, strokes and peripheral vascular disease. Diabetics are more susceptible to many other illnesses and conditions and often have worse prognoses than people without the disease.

Since much of the work of managing diabetes rests on the individual, it is essential that those who are living with the disease have the skills and resources to effectively balance insulin (medication), food intake and physical activity on a daily basis, and to monitor progress at regular intervals.

The Sarasota County Wellness Coalition works through partnerships to create a healthier community. The coalition sponsors free and low-cost education sessions on a range of obesity prevention topics. Member organizations of the coalition include the Sarasota County Health Department, Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, the Sarasota County Extension Family Nutrition Program, Venice Regional Medical Center, Sarasota County schools, the Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center and the South County Family YMCA.

Seating is limited. Those interested in attending are asked to RSVP by Wednesday, March 28. For more information or to register for the seminar, contact Sarasota County Wellness Coalition Chair Linda Glover at 941-927-9000, ext. 32101, or via e-mail at Linda_Glover@doh.state.fl.us. Visit The Sarasota County Wellness Coalition's website at www.sarasotawellness.org.

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