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Tennessee ranks highest in the nation for diabetes

Chattanooga-TN, Did you know that according to a CDC survey, Tennessee has the highest percentage of people with diabetes in the US? November is American Diabetes Month and the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department wants to highlight the importance of diabetes prevention and management.

According to the American Diabetes Association, 24 million Americans live with diabetes and 57 million more are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. In Tennessee, the percentage of adults with type 2 diabetes has tripled since 1997.

In Hamilton County, approximately 11 percent of adults reported they had diabetes. Of those adults, more than three-quarters were overweight or obese; more than half had not exercised or done any physical activity in the past month, according to the 2010 Hamilton County Community Health Data Profile.

"Diabetes is a serious disease that can lead to complications such as vision loss, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, and kidney disease," said Jill Heine, Cardiovascular Health Educator at the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department. "Taking the right steps to prevent this disease could be one of the most important things you do for your health," she added.

A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control indicates if current trends continue, 1 in 3 Americans will have Type 2 diabetes by 2050.

Most people can delay or prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes through weight loss, exercise, and by maintaining a healthy diet, according to the CDC Diabetes Prevention Program.

The CDC advises people aged 45 and older to be tested for diabetes, especially if they are overweight. People who are younger than age 45 but who are also overweight and have one or more additional risk factors should be tested.

Those risk factors include:

- A parent, brother, or sister with diabetes.
- African American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic American/Latino heritage.
- Prior history of gestational diabetes or birth of at least one baby weighing more than 9 pounds.
- High blood pressure measuring 140/90 or higher.
- Abnormal cholesterol with HDL ("good") cholesterol is 35 or lower, or triglyceride level is 250 or higher.
- Physical inactivity—exercising fewer than three times a week.

For more information on diabetes prevention and management, visit the National Diabetes Education Program at <http://www.ndep.nih.gov/> or contact the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department-Cardiovascular Health Education at 209-8209 or by email at JillH@HamiltonTN.gov.

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