

## HURON PERTH HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE

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### Canadians Urged to Check Their Risk for Diabetes and Access Support if Needed

An estimated 1.5 million Canadians live with undiagnosed type 2 diabetes, underlining the importance of raising awareness of its risk factors. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body can't properly use the insulin that is released or does not make enough insulin. As a result, sugar builds up in the blood instead of being used as energy. Type 2 diabetes and prediabetes usually develop in adulthood, although more children and adolescents are being diagnosed. Prediabetes means a person's blood glucose (sugar) levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Nearly half of those with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes.

"There are a number of factors that increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and anyone who has one or more risk factors should be tested more frequently or start regular screening earlier with their family doctor," says Aileen Knip, Registered Nurse and Certified Diabetes Educator.

Diabetes Canada also offers a free online test to assess your risk of developing prediabetes or diabetes. Check out <http://www.diabetestest.ca/> website and fill out a CANRISK test to identify your risk.

Risk factors include: having a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes; being a member of a high-risk group (Aboriginal, Hispanic, South Asian, Asian, or African descent); having health complications associated with diabetes; having given birth to a baby that weighed more than nine pounds at birth or having had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy); having high blood pressure; having high cholesterol or other fats in the blood; and/or being overweight, especially if that weight is mostly carried around the stomach.

Research shows that some long-term diabetes complications such as heart disease and nerve damage may begin during prediabetes, but the risk of developing diabetes can be reduced by nearly 60 per cent through lifestyle modifications. If left undiagnosed or untreated, diabetes is a leading cause of life-threatening complications, including heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and amputation. Currently, 20 people are diagnosed with diabetes every hour of every day in Canada.

"The Huron Perth Diabetes Education Centres offer support for those individuals living with diabetes," adds Knip. "Individuals do not need referrals from their family doctors to access any of our services, they can simply call our office, visit our website or even email a question."

Diabetes Education Centres are located throughout Huron and Perth including Goderich, Exeter, Wingham, Listowel, Seaforth, St. Marys and Stratford. To learn more visit [www.huronperthdiabetes.com](http://www.huronperthdiabetes.com) or call 1-519-272-8210 extension 2365.

Support and education is also available on a monthly basis at the Diabetes Support Group in Stratford. Taking place on the first Thursday of the month (with a break in July and August) from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Community Room at Sobeys, this group discusses a different topic each month. Those living

with diabetes and their caregivers are welcome to attend and there is no cost for this group. Upcoming topics include: Managing the Holidays (December); Optimizing Online Information for Diabetes and Nutrition (January) and Heart Health (February).



PHOTO CUTLINE: Some of the members of the Huron Perth Diabetes Education Team. L to R: Victoria Zimmer, RD & CDE Aileen Knip, RN & CDE, Amy Smith, RN & CDE and Sandy Kreis, RN & CDE.

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