

## **Diabetes: A Family Matter Ask Me Campaign**

### **Brief Description:**

The purpose of this activity is to raise community awareness about healthy lifestyles and diabetes risks in your community. Diabetes is often a hidden disease. People do not talk about the risks of type 2 diabetes and its family risks often.

However, they often talk about cancer. According to recent reports from the National Cancer Institute, some evidence suggests that cancer rates have been declining. Due to earlier screening and diagnosis, cancer is being diagnosed earlier and deaths from the disease are decreasing. People across the nation are more aware of cancer risks and are acting more quickly about their concerns. Everyone recognizes the pink ribbon now as a sign for cancer and the hope for its cure.

Our nation is now faced with an epidemic of obesity and diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have reported that from 1980 through 2006 the number of Americans with diabetes tripled from 5.6 million to 16.8 million. In 2008, 24 million people were identified with diabetes and another 57 million people are estimated to have pre-diabetes, a condition that puts people at increased risk for diabetes. Nationally, the data indicate increased diabetes rates in areas of the Southeast and Appalachia. These regions have traditionally been recognized as being at higher risk for many chronic diseases, including heart disease and stroke. Higher rates of obesity have been found in many states where Appalachian counties are located. Thus, concerns about higher risks

for people living in these regions are increasing.

We can do something about it! Studies have shown that people that lose weight and increase their physical activity can prevent or delay diabetes and return their blood glucose levels to normal. We can get the prevention message out to people in the places where we live.

### **Objectives:**

The purpose of this activity is to increase the visibility of health promotion and diabetes prevention in your local community by involving family, friends, and local groups.

### **Participants:**

This is an activity that anyone and everyone can take part. Start with your local health professionals, diabetes coalition, and volunteer *SUGAR Helpers*. Encourage them to reach out to family, friends, and others in the community and aim to get everyone involved.

### **Costs:**

The costs for this activity will likely be small, but the returns and reach into your community could be wide.

### **Activity Duration:**

The duration of this activity can be brief or be viewed as on-going, one that enlarges the circle of those involved over time.

### **Materials Needed:**

The only thing needed for this activity is some willing volunteers, a supply of *Ask Me Buttons*, and the time it takes to respond to

people's questions when they ask what the button means. These buttons have the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* logo and website on them. You will find the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* program logo on the *Toolkit Materials* webpage <[www.diabetesfamily.net](http://www.diabetesfamily.net)>. You can use the logo to make some pins locally.

### **Instructions:**

This activity entails wearing an Ask Me Button and being prepared to talk about diabetes risks and prevention. You do not need to be an expert to participate in this activity. The things you need to be able to say are things like these:

- Diabetes is a big problem in the nation and our community.
- Family members are at risk for diabetes when others in the family have the disease.
- Talk to your kids about being active and eating healthy so they won't get diabetes.
- Be sure to have a regular medical check-up and see your doctor if you are having problems like always being thirsty, drinking lots of fluids, or needing to use the bathroom often.
- Diabetes risks can be decreased by reducing your weight and increasing your activity by small amounts.

Your local diabetes educator may have a flyer or fact sheet to give to people when they ask. You may also want to have a list of local resources for people with diabetes. Your local diabetes coalition or volunteer *SUGAR Helpers* might want to develop a special brochure for use in your community. You might want to share some of the brochures from the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* toolkit with those that have

questions about diabetes. You could offer to show them the film or suggest that they go to the program website <[www.diabetesfamily.net](http://www.diabetesfamily.net)> to get more information. You can tell them about the social networking site online where they can connect with others in the Appalachian region to learn more about the ways others are living with and preventing the risks linked with diabetes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, self-management education or training is a key step in improving health outcomes and quality of life. This education focuses on self-care behaviors, such as healthy eating, being active, and monitoring blood sugar. Diabetes educators can work together with people that have been diagnosed with diabetes or at risk for it and help them get the facts they need. They can also help problem-solve and point to ways the disease and its related conditions can be managed. A problem in the Appalachian region is that diabetes educations and other medical experts that know how to care for diabetes are not always available. By using *Citizen Action* and the *Ask Me Buttons*, local people can spread the word about health promotion and diabetes prevention.

### **Ways to Extend the Activity:**

This activity can be extended by adding the use of *Ask Me Sticky Pads*. If quantities of these are printed, you might want to have them printed so that they include the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website and your own local information. Sticky pads are useful for everyone and they serve as a constant reminder of any message that you want to convey.



**Final Word:**

If you complete this activity, be sure to return to the **Communicate** section of the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website <[www.diabetesfamily.net](http://www.diabetesfamily.net)> and describe how you have used this activity in your community. Share the outcomes of the activity. What worked well? What did not work? By doing this, others across the Appalachian region can learn from one another about new and better ways to use these activities. It is likely that you will have some new ideas of your own to contribute.

</p>