



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Knox County Health Department Offers Group Interactive Approach for Diabetes Management

Being diagnosed with diabetes is a life-changing event. Managing the disease can be time consuming and overwhelming. That's why Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is now offering an interactive diabetes management tool involving a method called Diabetes Conversation Maps to help patients cope and learn from each other. Designed for small groups of 8-15 participants, KCHD's trained staff of dietitians can facilitate the program at businesses, churches or other organizations at no charge. For more information on bringing the Diabetes Conversation Maps to your group, call 215-5170.

Recommended by the American Diabetes Association, the program has been very effective across the country by helping patients understand and assume responsibility for managing their diabetes – not just telling them what to do. The program operates similarly to a board game with a map of diabetes issues. By progressing as a group across the map, participants ask and answer questions, and learn from one another as well as the educator. KCHD's Diabetes Conversation Maps benefit patients by providing visual models that can be remembered more effectively; allowing them to discover answers for themselves; helping patients internalize and personalize health information in a fun and engaging way. Better diabetes self-management is the goal. Each session lasts 90 minutes to 2 hours. Participants are encouraged to schedule/attend multiple sessions because different aspects of the disease will be discussed.

"Patients always say how delighted they are with the practical tips they learn from other people in the Map session," said Susan Fowlkes, KCHD clinical nutrition director. "Simple suggestions are shared that make diabetes management easier in day-to-day living."

In Tennessee, the percentage of adults with diabetes almost doubled between 1996 and 2005, from 5 to 9.1 percent and the state had the sixth highest percentage of diabetic adults compared to all other states. **In Knox County, diabetes was the seventh leading cause of premature death in 2005. In 2008, almost 10 percent of Knox County adults reported they have been diagnosed with diabetes.** This estimate does not include pre-diabetes or borderline diabetes. The estimate for 2002 was 7.1 percent and in 2005, it was 8.2 percent (Knox County Behavior Risk Factor Survey, 2002, 2005, 2008). According to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 17.9 million people nationally diagnosed with diabetes and an estimated 5.7 million people who have the disease but are undiagnosed. If current trends continue, one out of three U.S. adults will have diabetes by 2050.

Knox County Health Department's initiatives through the Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Diabetes (CARD) Program directly address reducing diabetes rates and include programs such as the tri-yearly diabetes management class series; community-wide walking programs; the Nutrition Education Activity Training (NEAT) after school program; mini-grants for local businesses and child care facilities to improve diet and physical activity; a walking school bus pilot project and an Eat Play Live Conference planned for March 2012. The CARD Program is funded through an agreement with the Tennessee Department of Health.

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