Five Small Steps To Prevent Diabetes

(NAPS)—You can prevent diabetes with just a few simple steps. Researchers say that people at risk for type 2 diabetes can reduce their risk by making just a few small lifestyle changes.

More than 54 million Americans are on their way to developing diabetes—and many don't even know it. They have a condition called prediabetes, which means their blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diabetic.

"There is now scientific proof that they can prevent or delay the disease and its devastating complications," says Wilma Wooten, M.D., MPH, principal investigator for the National Medical Association's (NMA) Diabetes Project. To learn more, visit www.nmanet.org.

The key to diabetes prevention is taking small steps toward living a healthier life, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP), which is jointly sponsored by National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and has the support of more than 200 partner organizations, including the NMA.

A landmark study sponsored by the NIH found that people at increased risk for diabetes can prevent or delay the onset of the disease by losing 5 to 7 percent of their body weight through increased physical activity and a low-fat, low-calorie eating plan.

If you are over 45 and overweight, you are at increased risk for prediabetes.

NDEP and the NMA recommend these five small steps you can take today to live a healthier life and prevent or delay diabetes:

• Find out if you are at risk. Talk to your health care provider at your next visit.

• Set realistic goals and start by making small changes. For example, try to get 15 minutes of physical activity a day this week. Each week, add five minutes until you build up to the recommended 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

• Try to eat more fruits and vegetables, beans and grains. Reduce the amount of fat in your diet. Choose grilled or baked foods instead of fried.

• Keeping a food diary is one of the most effective ways to lose weight and keep it off. Review this diary with your health care provider.

• Making even modest lifestyle changes can be tough in the beginning. Try adding one new healthy change a week. Always get back on track, even if you fall off a few times. The key is just to keep at it. If you have prediabetes, the NDEP has information to help you. To get a free copy of "Small Steps. Big Rewards. Your Game Plan for Preventing Type 2 Diabetes," call (800) 438-5383 or visit www.ndep.nih.gov.

The most important way to prevent diabetes is to take action toward living a healthier life.

Did You Know?

According to the National Diabetes Education Program and the National Medical Association, people at risk for diabetes can prevent or delay its onset by losing weight through increased physical activity and a low-fat, low-calorie eating plan. Learn more at www.ndep.nih.gov.