

For Immediate Release
Contact: Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely
760.404.1945
Jlecomte-hinely@HARCdata.org



National Diabetes Month: A Coachella Valley Perspective

Palm Desert, CA (November 1, 2017) — Recognized every November, American Diabetes Month is intended to bring attention to the epidemic and its impact on individuals and communities across the nation. The nonprofit organization HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is well-known for their commitment to researching local health issues, and provides an in-depth look at diabetes in the Coachella Valley.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which the body can no longer effectively turn food into energy, due to problems with the hormone insulin. With diabetes, insulin is either not being produced or not being used effectively by the body. When this happens, symptoms may involve thirst/hunger, extreme fatigue, nausea, blurry vision, weight loss, and tingling, pain, and numbness. Over time, diabetes can cause other significant health problems such as cardiovascular disease, nerve damage, vision loss, kidney disease, skin conditions, and foot damage.

Not all symptoms for diabetes are the same, and this is because of the various types of diabetes that exist: type 1, type 2, and gestational. With type 1, symptoms emerge at an earlier age (children, adolescents, young adults), and insulin injections are needed on a daily basis in order to survive. Type 2 diabetes, on the other hand, typically occurs over the age of 45, and may take years before symptoms begin to occur. Fortunately, type 2 diabetes can be prevented by engaging in healthier lifestyle choices such as diet and exercise. Gestational diabetes, as the name suggests, occurs in pregnant women. While gestational diabetes typically ends once the pregnancy is over, both the mother and the baby are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes following the pregnancy.

How common is Diabetes?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that over 30 million Americans are living with diabetes, meaning that more than nine percent of the population has diabetes. Diabetes has devastating consequences and represents the 7th leading cause of death in the United States.

According to HARC data, nearly 40,000 adults in the Coachella Valley have been diagnosed with diabetes; equivalent to roughly 12.8% of the Coachella Valley population. In addition to this estimate, there are another 9,000 adults who have borderline or pre-diabetes, here in the Coachella Valley.

Steps to dealing with Diabetes

In order to determine if you have diabetes, a range of blood sugar tests can be administered by your healthcare provider. After diagnosis, these tests are continued so that the condition can be effectively monitored. One such test, includes the A1C test, which measures the average level of blood sugar over the past three months. The American Diabetes Association recommends that people with diabetes, meeting their treatment goals, have an A1C test twice a year. However, this may be done as often as four times per year to ensure blood sugar levels are within recommended range.

According to HARC's 2016 data, more than half (57%) of adults with diabetes in the Coachella Valley received the A1C test between one to three times in the past year. However, more than 3,000 adults with diabetes have never had the A1C test. These adults should schedule their A1C test soon in order to properly manage their condition.

As mentioned, diabetes can also result in other health conditions such as eye and foot damage. Fortunately, most adults (78.7%) with diabetes in the Coachella Valley have received an eye exam in the past year, and more than half (66.0%) have had their feet checked within the past year. However, there are currently over 8,000 adults in need of an eye exam, and another 12,000 adults in need of a foot exam.

There are local resources and events in the Coachella Valley related to the issues of diabetes:

- Desert Oasis Health Care provides group health education classes for individuals and families impacted by diabetes. There are three locations in Coachella Valley where you can attend for free, given you are a patient of Desert Oasis Health Care.
- An upcoming event called the 2017 Step Out: Coachella Valley aims to raise awareness for diabetes. This event will take place November 4th and will include a health fair and a united march for participants.

To learn more about diabetes, please visit www.cdc.gov/diabetes or <http://www.diabetes.org>

About HARC

HARC is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Palm Desert, CA. HARC provides research and evaluation services in the field of health, wellness, and quality of life, with a special focus on the Coachella Valley. To learn more about HARC, visit www.HARCdata.org