

# ABIPA – ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE INSTITUTE OF PARITY ACHIEVEMENT

## Being Aware of Diabetes as We Enter the Holiday Season



JéWana Grier-McEachin. Photo: Pro16 Productions

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director

*I have always found it interesting that November is designated as Diabetes Awareness Month.*

We all have experienced the good and the bad of this historic holiday food season. I suggest that we not shame ourselves for the food choices we make—let's remember how we can best fuel our lives with the food we eat.

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death, and one of the leading causes of disability in the United States. More than 34 million Americans have diabetes, and approximately one in three people in the United States are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Simply put, diabetes is a chronic disease that affects how your body turns food into energy. Diabetes can develop either due to inadequate or non-production of insulin, or result from your body's inability to use or respond to the insulin it does produce.

### There Are Three Main Types of Diabetes:

Type 1 diabetes, once known as juvenile diabetes or insulin-dependent diabetes, is a chronic condition in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin. Although type 1 diabetes usually appears during childhood or adolescence, it can develop at any age.

Type 2 diabetes, once known as adult-onset diabetes, is a chronic condition in which the body resists the effects of insulin or does not produce enough insulin to maintain normal glucose levels. Today, more children are being diagnosed with the disorder, probably due to the rise in childhood obesity.

Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that is diagnosed in a woman during pregnancy. Gestational diabetes causes high blood sugar that can affect the pregnancy and the baby's health.

Early detection and diagnosis of diabetes is key to treatment. It is important to identify and recognize the various signs and symptoms of diabetes, and to get screened and tested to help decrease your risk of developing complications.



### Ways to Reduce Your Risk

The top five recommendations that may help prevent, manage, or lower your risk of developing diabetes are:

- Work with your primary care physician or medical health professional to help manage your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels.
- Develop or maintain a healthy diet. Work with a dietitian or diabetes educator to create an eating plan that will help manage blood sugar.
- Get moving. Find activities you love and do them as often as you can.
- Stop smoking or using tobacco products.
- Learn ways to manage stress.

As we enter the holiday season, try intentionally integrating delicious diabetic-friendly dishes into your holiday spread for the people in your life who are trying to manage or prevent diabetes.



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Kelly White, MHE, MPH. Photo: Pro16 Productions

## Tips For Managing and Preventing Diabetes

by Kelly White, MHE, MPH,  
ABIPA Health Education Program Manager

*Millions of Americans are diagnosed every year, with type 2 being most common.*

While patients with type 1 diabetes have no control over diagnosis, prevention is key when speaking about type 2 diabetes.

One thing that is important about prevention is knowing your risk for a specific disease. Research has shown that our risk for health issues can happen in more ways than one.

For instance, for some people it is the makeup of their genetics—health issues that are said to run in the family. If mom, dad, and grandparents all dealt with a chronic health issue, this puts that person at a higher risk for developing the same health issues. On the other hand, if there is no family history, then the risk of disease could be due to our own genetic make-up and lifestyle.

When speaking of type 2 diabetes and prevention, there are a few things you want to do to avoid diagnosis. Whether you are predisposed due to genetics, or maintaining a

lifestyle that could use a few changes, think about how you would want to begin your journey to better health.

Most of us can attest that making any change can be a challenging task if you are not prepared to do so, but, it is never too late to start. Here are a few tips that could help you get started.

Eating healthier plant-based foods, which are full of much needed nutrients and vitamins; incorporating at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily; and losing weight are all changes that work together. Once you begin to change your diet and add physical activity, you are likely to see weight loss. Remember, even slight changes over time can yield big results.

Eating healthy, unsaturated fats is good for cholesterol levels and heart health. Sunflower seed oil, nuts and seeds, and fatty fish all contain the healthy fats our bodies need.

Stay away from diets that promise quick results such as losing fifteen pounds in one week. These types of fad diets will help you lose the weight, but longer-term benefits or results may not be guaranteed.

As always be sure to see your provider for your yearly check-ins to find out what it would mean to be pre-diabetic or to have a diagnosis of diabetes. Have your provider explain what you need to do for optimal health.

If you do not know how to begin the conversation with your provider, start by taking the diabetic risk test offered by the American Diabetes Association at [diabetes.org/diabetes/risk-test](http://diabetes.org/diabetes/risk-test).

Remember, it's never too late to start!

Source: Mayo Clinic



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ABIPA promotes economic, social, and healthy parity achievement for African Americans and other underserved populations in Buncombe County through advocacy, education, research, and community partnerships.

