



You leave the doctor with a sore finger and the weight of a new disease that is combating your body. Diabetes. According to the American Diabetes Association 1.4 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes every year. The 2015 Defiance County Community Health Assessment identified that 9% of Defiance County adults had been diagnosed with diabetes. Residents 65 years and older are at a higher risk for type 2 diabetes with 25% of the population living with this disease.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes. This condition causes blood glucose (sugar) levels to rise higher than normal, and leads to serious health problems if left untreated. High blood sugar levels can lead to heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure, and amputation of toes, feet or legs according to the CDC, 2016.

Several risk factors for type 2 diabetes can be managed or prevented. The CDC lists being overweight or obese, having high blood pressure measuring 140/90 and above, and being physically inactive as characteristics that increase the likelihood of developing diabetes. Other risk factors that cannot be controlled include having a parent, brother or sister with diabetes, being African American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic/Latino heritage.

A simple blood test called the A1c can be done by using a sample of blood from a finger-stick or small vial of blood. This test gives healthcare professionals an idea of your average blood sugar level for the past 3 months. The CDC recommends anyone 45 years or older should consider getting tested for diabetes. People younger than 45, but are overweight and have additional risk factors, should consider getting tested. Talk to your doctor to evaluate your risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The American Diabetes Association also has a Diabetes Risk Test on their website that can help assess your risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

The national Institute of Health conducted a recent study of individuals with prediabetes (individuals who have a blood sugar level higher than normal but not high enough for a diagnosis of diabetes). The study looked at programs that help people mix eating healthy with adding physical activity into daily routines. Lifestyle change strategies included tracking your food and physical activity, setting goals and overcoming barriers that may prevent lifestyle changes. The study found that modest lifestyle changes led to a weight loss of 5 to 7 percent and can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by 58% in those individuals at high risk.

Regardless of your diabetic status talk to your doctor about your risk factors and strategies to prevent or control diabetes. Remember that diet, exercise and weight loss are treatments that you can implement every day.