



Heart disease is leading killer of people with diabetes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Sandra Langston
334-206-2062
slangston@adph.state.al.us

Heart disease and stroke are major threats to people with diabetes, causing at least 65 percent of deaths in persons with the disease. Recent studies have shown that, in addition to controlling blood glucose levels, managing blood pressure and cholesterol levels can help save the lives of thousands of people with diabetes.

In Alabama, current estimates indicate that almost 1 in 10 people have been diagnosed with diabetes and thousands more have the disease and do not know it. Many people with diabetes do not know that they are at risk for cardiovascular disease, but adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have heart disease or suffer a stroke than people without the disease.

Middle-aged people with diabetes have the same risk for heart attack as people without diabetes who have already had a heart attack. The risks can be lowered through better management and control of diabetes, including blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Marking November as National Diabetes Month, the Alabama Department of Public Health is joining forces with the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) and other partner organizations to inform people with diabetes to take care of their hearts by focusing on three numbers: blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol.

People with diabetes should ask their doctors or other health care providers about these numbers. The following levels are recommended for most people with diabetes:

- Blood glucose - less than 7 percent on the hemoglobin A1C test that measures average blood glucose over the past three months. Check at least twice a year.
- Blood pressure: below 130/80. Check at every doctor's visit.
- Cholesterol (LDL): below 100. Check at least once a year.

"If people take care of their hearts by controlling blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol, they can live longer, healthier lives," said Dr. Jack Hataway, director of the health department's Chronic Disease Prevention Division. "Being physically active for 30 minutes a day, taking medicines as prescribed and maintaining a healthy diet all contribute to good management of diabetes," he added.

The NDEP offers a recipe booklet featuring new twists on traditional recipes - meals that are flavorful but low in fat and salt. A copy of the free booklet and additional information on diabetes in Spanish and English can be ordered by calling the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse at 1-800-438-5383.

The NDEP, a federally funded program co-sponsored by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a leading source for information about diabetes care and prevention. For more information about diabetes, visit the NDEP Web site at www.ndep.nih.gov or the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at www.adph.org.

10/31/02