

News Column – Donna Krug, Family & Consumer Science Agent and District Director – Cottonwood Extension District

Here's to Your Health: Diabetes Awareness Month

November is National Diabetes Month, so it is the perfect time to bring awareness about diabetes and its impact on individuals and families. There is a strong link between diabetes and cardiovascular disease, so in order to equip individuals and communities with information that will increase awareness of the diabetes-heart disease link, there are some excellent resources at my fingertips.

Care for self is a key element in healthy relationships. Similar to the airline reminder that in an emergency you should “put on your oxygen mask before attempting to help others”, taking care of your own health is critical to caring for your family. A lifestyle that includes regular exercise and a healthy dose of fruits and vegetables can improve physical and mental health.

According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDKD), one in four Americans has diabetes and does not know it. The American Diabetes Association Diabetes Risk Test provides a quick and easy way to determine risk for type 2 diabetes. I took the test, located at the following website: [www.diabetes.org/risk-test](http://www.diabetes.org/risk-test) I was happy to learn that I am currently at low risk for developing diabetes. Of course that can change as we age, or if we experience other health issues, like high blood pressure.

Factors like getting plenty of exercise and maintaining a healthy weight are important determinants for whether or not diabetes will be in your future. And, if you are the parents of young children you need to be aware that nearly 1/3 of American youth are overweight. This fact directly relates to the increase in kids who have type 2 diabetes, some as young as 10 years old.

Parents have the power to make healthy changes that give kids the best chance to prevent type 2 diabetes. And when the whole family makes changes together, it is easier to create healthy habits that stick. Get started with these simple but effective tips for healthy eating and being active family style.

- Drink more [water](#) and fewer sugary drinks.
- Eat more [fruits and vegetables](#).
- Make favorite foods healthier.
- Get kids involved in making healthier meals.
- Eat slowly—it takes at least 20 minutes to start feeling full.
- Eat at the dinner table only, not in front of the TV or computer.
- Shop for food together.
- Shop on a full stomach so you're not tempted to buy unhealthy food.
- Teach your kids to read food labels to understand which foods are healthiest.
- Don't insist kids clean their plates.
- Serve small portions; let kids ask for seconds.

- Reward kids with praise instead of food.

## **Getting Physical**

- Aim for your child to get 60 minutes of physical activity a day, in several 10- or 15-minute sessions or all at once.
- Start slow and build up.
- Keep it positive—focus on progress.
- Take parent and kid fitness classes together.
- Make physical activity more fun; try new things.
- Ask kids what activities they like best—everyone is different.
- Encourage kids to join a sports team.
- Have a “fit kit” available—a jump rope, hand weights, resistance bands.
- Limit screen time to 2 hours a day.
- Plan active outings, like hiking or biking.
- Take walks together.
- Move more in and out of the house—vacuuming, raking leaves, gardening.
- Turn chores into games, like racing to see how fast you can clean the house.

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