



We Have the Power to Prevent Diabetes

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Diabetes is an epidemic in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, but we can fight back. The good news is that clinical studies have shown that by losing a small amount of weight, we can stop the diabetes epidemic in its tracks and live longer, healthier lives.

Here are the facts: American Indians and Alaska Natives are, on average, 2.3 times more likely to have diabetes than non-Hispanic whites of a similar age. According to the Indian Health Service, more than 100,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives are being treated for type 2 diabetes. And in the southeastern United States and in southern Arizona, about 28 percent of American Indians 20 years and older have diabetes—*that's more than one in every four people.*

As American Indians and Alaska Natives we *can* and *must* take charge of our health, or diabetes will continue to increase in our communities. Diabetes and its complications are destroying the dreams and goals of too many of our people, even our children. We have the power to stop the epidemic, but we must take action now.

The Diabetes Prevention Program, a research study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), showed that people who are overweight and at high risk for diabetes can lower their high blood sugar levels and prevent the onset of diabetes. How? By losing 5 to 7 percent of body weight through eating a lower fat and lower calorie diet and walking five days a week for 30 minutes a day. American Indians and Alaska Natives participated in this study and helped to prove that it is possible to prevent diabetes. Finally, our communities have hope.

The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) is working with American Indian and Alaska Native health professionals to spread the good news in Indian Country and in Alaska. The program has created the *Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent type 2 Diabetes* campaign and its tailored message for American Indians and

Alaska Natives, “We Have the Power to Prevent Diabetes.”

The “We have the Power to Prevent Diabetes” campaign provides free information and tools designed to help educate American Indians and Alaska Natives at risk for diabetes on how they can take the small steps needed to prevent the disease. There are tip sheets, posters, public service ads, and a GAME PLAN kit, complete with a fat and calorie counter and a physical activity tracker. These materials use motivational messages from community members to encourage each of us to take steps to prevent diabetes.

We must take action now. American Indians and Alaska Natives must develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle, eat more fruits and vegetables, more low-fat meats and poultry, and less high-fat, high calorie foods. And we simply must *move* more and get regular physical activity and exercise. With these small steps, we can transform the current epidemic of type 2 diabetes into a distant memory.

To be successful in this fight against diabetes, we must work together. Help your loved ones and others in our communities harness their power to prevent diabetes. Help them realize that it doesn't require climbing a mountain or jogging five miles a day. Life-changing results can be achieved by losing a small amount of weight through healthy eating and getting 30 minutes of physical activity, such as walking, five days a week. Help our community understand that diabetes prevention is proven, possible, and powerful, and taking small steps yield big rewards. We do have the power to prevent diabetes.

For more information about diabetes prevention, call 1-800-438-5383 and get your free GAME PLAN for preventing type 2 diabetes or visit www.ndep.nih.gov.

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