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Oklahoma HMO shares knowledge on comprehensive diabetes care

Nearly one quarter of the U.S. population is at risk for diabetes

OKLAHOMA – It's estimated that more than 79 million Americans – nearly one quarter of the U.S. population – aged 20 or older have prediabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). GlobalHealth, an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization (HMO), is educating Oklahomans about diabetes to empower them to take charge of their healthcare.

"When it comes to diabetic care, it's much more than just measuring blood sugar levels," said Dr. Wesley Williams, medical director at GlobalHealth. "It's very important to have additional testing done by your primary care physician (PCP). Two things most people forget to have checked in association with diabetes is a retinal exam and comprehensive foot examination."

This April, GlobalHealth is offering Oklahomans the following information to help those already diagnosed with diabetes, those who are at risk of diabetes or those who care for someone with diabetes. This information is meant to educate individuals on how to be prepared for their PCP appointments and to be as healthy as possible.

Know the disease: Diabetes Mellitus is a disease where blood glucose levels are above normal. The pancreas makes a hormone called insulin to help glucose get into the body's cells. When people have diabetes, their bodies either do not make enough insulin or cannot use insulin as well as they should, which results in glucose building up in the blood. High blood sugar levels can lead to fatigue, excessive thirst and urination, increased infections and slower healing, and many other unwanted health concerns, according to the CDC.

Be aware of prediabetes: Prediabetes is a condition in which individuals have higher blood glucose levels than normal but not high enough to be classified as diabetes. People with prediabetes have an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and suffering from a stroke. Diabetes can lead to serious complications and premature death, but people with diabetes can take steps to control the disease and lower the risk of complications. Managing diabetes is possible with proper medical care, support and motivation, according to the CDC.

Know the testing. Eye exams can detect damage to the small blood vessels in the retina through a condition called diabetic retinopathy as well as glaucoma and other eye issues. Diabetes can also affect the feet as small wounds on the foot or legs and can worsen quickly without proper care. It's estimated that nearly 7 percent of diabetic patients will develop a diabetic foot ulcer. Diabetic nephropathy is a type of kidney disease that occurs when nephrons, which filter blood to remove waste from the body, thicken and become scarred. A diabetic nephropathy assessment can detect signs of kidney problems. Lastly, an A1C test shows the average blood sugar level over a three-month period and can show how well the patient's diabetes is controlled. Discuss these tests with your PCP to see if they are right for you.

"Many people with diabetes do not realize something is wrong until they experience symptoms, which could have been prevented with comprehensive exams," Williams said. "Talk with your PCP about what is needed to stay ahead of diabetes."

About GlobalHealth

GlobalHealth is changing health insurance in Oklahoma. As an industry leader, GlobalHealth is an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization covering 44,000 individuals in all 77 Oklahoma counties. Working proactively with each member, GlobalHealth engages a personalized management plan to address their specific needs and ensure the best possible health outcomes. GlobalHealth utilizes cutting edge, predictive data technology as a foundation to deliver improved healthcare as part of its commitment to making health insurance more affordable. Its membership includes state and education employees, federal employees, municipal employees and Medicare Advantage members. GlobalHealth employs more than 200 associates throughout Oklahoma. To learn more, visit www.GlobalHealth.com.

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