

What is a diabetes prevention program?

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One in three U.S. adults has prediabetes, the precursor to type 2 diabetes, so it's likely that a portion of your patient population is affected. Fortunately, physicians can find support in caring for these patients through an evidence-based diabetes prevention program.

In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched the National Diabetes Prevention Program based on research led by the National Institutes of Health, which showed that individuals at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes who participated in structured lifestyle change programs saw a significant reduction in the incidence of the disease.

The cornerstone of the National Diabetes Prevention Program is a year-long program that helps participants make real lifestyle changes such as eating healthier, incorporating physical activity into their daily lives and improving problem-solving and coping skills. Participants meet with a trained lifestyle coach and a small group of people who are making lifestyle changes to prevent diabetes. Scheduled sessions are weekly for 6 months and then monthly for 6 months.

This proven program can help adults with prediabetes make achievable and realistic lifestyle changes to cut their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58 percent. In those with prediabetes over age 60, the reduction is even greater, at 71 percent.

How can a diabetes prevention program help my patients?

To make it easier to include prediabetes identification into routine practice workflows, the AMA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a new toolkit for physicians and their care teams. Part of the toolkit outlines the steps required to screen and test patients for prediabetes and help physicians connect with diabetes prevention programs in their communities, or virtual and online programs.

“All primary care providers see patients day after day who have prediabetes and it's not something you can address in a five-minute, end-of-visit discussion, or with a pamphlet,” said Steven Reed, MD,

a primary care physician from Minnesota. “To have the diabetes prevention program available is something bigger that you can give [patients] that’s clinically proven and available nationwide.”

As part of its Improving Health Outcomes initiative, the AMA spent the past year working with the YMCA of the USA and 11 physician practice pilot sites in four states (including Minnesota) to increase physician screening for prediabetes and referral of patients with prediabetes to diabetes prevention programs offered by local YMCAs—which use the CDC’s program.

“Most times we think we have to shoulder all of the work and the resources around taking care of our patients and making sure they stay healthy, but this partnership with the community, and having that resource outside of our four walls, really does expand our care team,” said Jeanine Rosner, director of clinical projects at the AMA’s practice pilot site in Minnesota.

What do patients think of the program?

Participants in the prevention program at the Twin Cities YMCAs saw an average weight loss of 5 percent last year, significantly reducing their risk for type 2 diabetes. More than 800 participants have completed the program in the Twin Cities metro area.

“The most important thing I needed from it was information,” said Dan Hayes, a Minneapolis-area patient. “I knew I needed to do the exercises. I needed information on what I can do to change my diet without making such drastic changes that I won’t stay with it. I’ve managed to, in nine weeks, lose 20 pounds.”

Read more about one patient’s experience with a diabetes prevention program at *AMA Wire*®.

Many resources are available to help integrate prediabetes screening methods into physician practices as part of the AMA and CDC’s multi-year initiative, *Prevent Diabetes STAT: Screen, Test, Act – Today*™.

Learn more about the AMA and CDC announcement, and read about how to identify patients with undetected prediabetes.