

Awareness of risk status key to prevention of diabetes

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A new study found that patients who have the precursor to type 2 diabetes are more likely to play an active role in preventing the onset of the disease if they are aware of their risk status, highlighting the importance of physician engagement on this issue.

The study, recently published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, found that out of nearly 2,700 participants who met the criteria for having prediabetes, only about 11 percent were aware of their diagnosis. Those who were aware of their diagnosis were more likely to engage in physical activity and weight management than the patients who did not know they had prediabetes.

The study also looked at the success rates in diabetes prevention programs, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's evidence-based National Diabetes Prevention Program. Patients who were aware of having prediabetes were more likely to achieve goals in these lifestyle intervention programs versus those who didn't know they had prediabetes.

"The impact of prediabetes awareness on the odds of engagement in physical activity and weight management highlights the special influence physician advice and input can have on patient behaviors," the study said.

The low awareness of prediabetes in the study is alarming, and unfortunately, it's in line with national data. Of the 86 million American adults who have prediabetes, only one in 10 knows they have it.

"To maximize the impact of physician discussions about prediabetes on reducing the incidence of diabetes, physicians must not only communicate this diagnosis to patients but must do so in a meaningful way," the study said. "Physicians should counsel patients that having prediabetes greatly increases the chances of developing diabetes and has been linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease."

What you can do in your practice



The AMA spent the past year working with the YMCA of the USA and 11 physician practice pilot sites in four states to increase physician screening and testing for prediabetes, and referral of patients with prediabetes to diabetes prevention programs offered by local YMCAs, which use the CDC's program.

This work helped inform Prevent Diabetes STAT: Screen, Test, Act – Today™, a multi-year AMA and CDC initiative that helps physicians refer patients to diabetes prevention programs in their communities and online. Prevent Diabetes STAT™ includes practical information on how to use an electronic health record (EHR) system to identify patients with prediabetes, patient-facing resources, and sample telephone scripts and referral forms for connecting patients with prevention programs.

In addition, the AMA's newly launched STEPS Forward website offers an interactive educational module to address prediabetes in your practice: Earn continuing medical education credit and see how to make the Prevent Diabetes STAT tools work for you.

Find effective diabetes prevention programs near your practice, and start screening, testing and referring patients today.