

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tips to avoid diabetes

According to the International Diabetes Federation there are more than 207 million cases of diabetes worldwide.

In Australia there are more than 1.1 million cases, making diabetes one of the most significant health concerns of our time.

Dr Sheila Cook, consultant endocrinologist at Toowoomba Hospital recently shared a range of healthy living tips to avoid diabetes.

“The theme of World Diabetes Day on 14 November is ‘act today, to change tomorrow’ which is good advice if you want to avoid going down the path towards the disease,” Dr Cook said.

“There are shelves full of books advocating various diets and lifestyles, claiming to offer solutions, but in reality there are simple things that people can do, starting today, that won’t cost them any more money, but could have a dramatic effect on their future.

“Instead of following fads, the key is to make lifelong dietary changes, so choosing foods that reduce the chances of developing diabetes is a great starting point.

“First and foremost is full-cream dairy products, including butter, cheese, milk and yoghurt.

“Eggs, nuts, and white meats like fish and chicken are also good, and one of the most important ways to reduce the likelihood of diabetes is to make sure there is plenty of fibre in your diet.

“That doesn’t mean eating endless packets of bran flakes - it’s as simple as eating more baked beans, which are a great source of fibre, but of course the key is having a balanced diet, so don’t overindulge on anything in particular.”

Dr Cook said avoiding foods that were known to contribute to the development of diabetes was equally important.

“Foods to avoid include things like sugary sweets, soft drinks and white bread,” Dr Cook said.

“People may also be surprised to know that excessive consumption of fruit, especially bananas, fruit juice, and too many potatoes, can also increase the chance of developing diabetes.

“The way food is prepared can also be a problem, with over-cooked red meat shown to be another factor that can raise the risk.

“A lot of this research has only come to light in the last five years, so for a long time I think we haven’t been receiving the full message when it comes to how dietary choice can affect our chances of developing or avoiding diabetes.”

Dr Cook said another simple strategy was to complement the right types of foods with appropriate exercise.

“The activities that reduce the chance of diabetes are those that increase muscle strength, so things like lifting weights or resistance training,” Dr Cook said.

“If you want to start slowly and build up to more strenuous activity, kick off with something as simple as standing up during the ad breaks while watching TV or doing a few arm curls with a can of baked beans. It’s about taking every opportunity to do a bit of resistance training throughout the day.

“Research also shows that losing a bit of weight can reduce the chance of developing diabetes, with a figure of five to ten per cent of your current weight suggested as a good goal, providing you are not ill or underweight to start with.

“Another significant factor is sleep. We should all be getting at least seven hours of uninterrupted sleep a night, so the easiest way is to go to bed earlier and avoid watching TV or using an iPad, computer or other screen device for the last hour before you go to bed.

“Giving yourself the best chance to avoid diabetes is not about spending money on a book – it can be as simple as making some good lifestyle and dietary choices, and sticking to them.”

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MEDIA: Contact Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service Media Team 4699 8725, 0448 996 296 or DDHHS_media@health.qld.gov.au