

## **Women & Diabetes**

### **The American Diabetes Association - Working to Improve the Lives of Women with, and at-risk for, Diabetes**

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's leading nonprofit health organization providing diabetes research, information and advocacy. Founded in 1940, the Association conducts programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, reaching hundreds of communities.

The mission of the organization is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. To fulfill this mission, the American Diabetes Association funds research, publishes scientific findings, provides information and other services to people with diabetes, their families, health care professionals and the public, and advocates for scientific research and for the rights of people with diabetes. The moving force behind our work is a network of more than one million volunteers, including a membership of over 445,000 diabetes patients and their families, and a professional society of nearly 19,000 researchers and health care providers.

Today, about 21 million Americans, including 9.1 million women, have diabetes. Yet many don't even know they have the disease. Diabetes can be especially hard on women; the burden of diabetes on women is unique, because the disease can affect both mothers and their unborn children. Diabetes can cause difficulties during pregnancy such as a miscarriage or a baby born with birth defects. Women with diabetes are also more likely to have a heart attack, and at a younger age, than other women without diabetes. Also, women with diabetes are more likely to be poor which makes it harder to manage the disease.

#### **What the ADA is doing for women & diabetes**

##### **Advocacy:**

The Government Affairs and Advocacy division of the American Diabetes Association works to improve access to quality care, fight to eliminate discrimination against people because of their diabetes and increase the federal government's financial commitment to diabetes research and programs.

The Association supports federal and state legislation that seeks to increase funding for diabetes research and prevention programs, promote the enhancement of stem cell research, end discrimination in the school and workplace and support accessible, affordable and adequate health care and coverage for individuals with diabetes. Currently, the Association is working to oppose association health plan legislation that would exempt health plans from

state regulation and oversight, leaving individual with diabetes without the critical protections currently guaranteed to them in 46 states.

The Association is in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Public Health Initiative on Diabetes and Women's Health. This initiative is essentially a national action plan to increase awareness about diabetes and women's health throughout the life stages. As part of the CDC collaboration, Government Affairs and Advocacy is working to include women and diabetes issues, such as gestational diabetes, into legislation being considered in Congress.

### **National Women & Diabetes Town Hall Meeting:**

Recently the Association worked with the Department of Health and Human Service's Coordinating Committee on Women's Health to co-host the first national Women & Diabetes Town Hall meeting. Recognizing that diabetes has an enormous impact on the health of America and its pocketbook, and that over half of the people diagnosed with diabetes are women; this meeting highlighted the issue of diabetes across the life span of women. This included a discussion of the unique impact diabetes has on women in terms of increased risk of heart disease (the leading killer of women), and other serious and deadly complications.

The aim of this meeting was to raise awareness of the unique impact that diabetes has on women and to educate policymakers and other influentials about this important topic. One of the focuses on the meeting was the discussion of the unique role women have within the family setting; as the gate-keeper for family health and care decisions, often for spouses, children and parents.

The meeting was a great success, well attended by Members of Congress, their staffs, and representatives from many women's organizations. It is our sincere hope that many of those in attendance (and the thousands watching via the live satellite and web broadcasts) will begin to think of diabetes as a women's issue.

### **Call Center:**

The American Diabetes Association's Call Center receives approximately 25,000 calls monthly to the Association's toll-free number. The staff at the Call Center is well trained and dedicated to helping people with diabetes, their families and friends find the answers they need.

Information specific to the topic of women & diabetes is available through the call center - where packets of information are tailored to meet the specific needs of each caller. These include, *Diabetes and Pregnancy*, *Gestational*

*Diabetes*, and *A Guide for Women with Diabetes*. Packets of information are tailored to meet the specific needs of each caller. Bilingual representatives are available as well as Spanish language materials.

A Diabetes Information Specialist is available 8:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. M-F. However, requests for diabetes packets are available 24 hours a day. The Call Center has proven itself to be a resource that people can count on - for support, encouragement, and education.

### **Communication:**

The Communications Department works with many national and local media outlets to disseminate information on diabetes to the audiences who need it the most, as well as helping to raise awareness in general.

In 2006, the department helped launch the "Sisterhood is Healthy" campaign as phase two of a collaborative national public awareness initiative between the American Diabetes Association, American Cancer Society, and American Heart Association - "Everyday Choices for a Healthier Life". The goal of the "Sisterhood is Healthy" campaign is to reach and motivate African American women, who have an increased risk for Diabetes, Cancer, Heart Disease, and Stroke, to make better everyday choices about their health that will encourage disease prevention and early detection.

Additionally, the department has worked closely with many African American celebrities, such as Gladys Knight, to increase awareness of diabetes and diabetes prevention in the African American community.

In the past the Communications department worked with the FDA's Office of Women's Health to collaborate on a brochure for women about diabetes as part of their "Take Time to Care" series. Available in both English and Spanish, the brochure is unique as it offers many messages; from risk messages to interpreting medication and food labels wisely to information about complications unique to women.

As part of this collaboration, the department also co-produced recipe cards in English and Spanish that feature culturally appropriate healthy recipes that are easy to prepare and diabetes friendly. The brochures and the recipe cards have been very well received.

The department works with many national magazines such as *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News & World Report* on "advertorial" pieces on diabetes. Some of these have featured information about women and diabetes. As an example, the department worked with Lippincott & Williams to develop diabetes related content for a publication entitled a "Guide to Women's Health".

This piece was distributed as a supplement to Nursing 2002, Nursing Management and the Nurse Practitioner and was endorsed by the National Women's Health Resource Center.

Another program, the Make the Link! initiative, jointly supported by the American Diabetes Association and the American College of Cardiology, is designed to call attention to the relationship between heart disease and diabetes. Some tactics have supported message targeted specifically towards women.

The department has worked with various women's organizations such as the Greater Federation of Women's Clubs and the National Council of Women's Organizations to distribute these materials. Many of these organizations have proven crucial to us for dissemination of this important information.

## **Scientific and Medical**

### **Research:**

To date, the Association has invested more than \$350 million in diabetes research throughout the nation. Currently, the Association funds more than 548 research projects to almost 200 different institutions and more than 550 individual scientists. The Association raises these critical funds through many vehicles, including its Research Foundation, special events, direct mail campaigns, and corporate partners.

At present, there are approximately fifteen examples of ADA funded research projects that directly target women. However, most of our studies on the prevention, treatment, or cure for types 1 & 2 diabetes will certainly impact women as a group.

### **Professional Education:**

It is the Association's belief that the quality of treatment received by women with diabetes is directly dependent upon the education and expertise of her health care team. The American Diabetes Association provides professional education activities and courses that focus on the latest in basic and clinical research, including women's health. They are designed to reach a wide audience of health care providers including diabetologists, researchers, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, psychologists, and podiatrists as well as international physicians and researchers. These activities come in a variety of educational formats, such as live, web-based, print, and CD ROM.

## **Information Resources**

In addition to research and professional education, the Scientific and Medical department is instrumental in the development of brochures and other educational materials. For instance, The American Diabetes Association has over 60 brochures available at low or no cost to individuals and groups.

Many of the informational pieces we produce are geared toward women - whether it is on the specific topic of the unique impact diabetes has on women, or in their societal role as gatekeepers to their families health and lifestyle decisions, the ADA offers women crucial information they need to deal with diabetes.

### **Publications:**

The American Diabetes Association is the world's foremost publisher in the field of diabetes literature, including *Diabetes Forecast*, a monthly consumer magazine, as well as a cadre of publications and journals for research and health care professionals, such as *Diabetes*, *Diabetes Care*, *Diabetes Spectrum*, *Clinical Diabetes*, and *DOC News* as well as a comprehensive library of medical management guides.

The Association currently has more than 180 titles in print and many more in development. Many of these books are designed to help people with diabetes and their families and friends deal with various aspects of the disease - from coping with stress to learning about carbohydrate counting to determining which physical activity suits you best, the books the ADA publishes offer something for everyone.

ADA has several books on women's health topics. These include both health care professional and consumer pieces with such topics as *101 Tips for a Healthy Pregnancy with Diabetes*, *Diabetes and Gestational Diabetes: What to Expect 5<sup>th</sup> edition*, and *Women and Diabetes 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Some books for health professionals include the following, *Reproductive Health Awareness for Teenage Women and Diabetes and Medical Management of Pregnancy Complicated by Diabetes, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*.

In addition, our many cookbooks feature healthy, tasty recipes and tips for people with diabetes and are especially popular. Since the Hispanic community is disproportionately affected by diabetes, many of our cookbooks are available in Spanish and feature healthy versions of traditional favorite recipes from many Spanish speaking cultures. ADA currently does publishes books for African Americans as well; these include *At Home with Gladys Knight, Month of*

*Meals: Soul Food Selections, New Soul Food Cookbook for people with Diabetes, and Dr Gavin's Health Guide for African Americans.*

**Web-site:**

The American Diabetes Association's award winning Web site, diabetes.org, is widely regarded as one of the most informative diabetes and nutrition resources on the web. The Web site averages more than 55 million page views each year. It provides visitors with information on popular topics such as pre-diabetes, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, healthy living, research, advocacy and community activities.

There are several sections on the site where visitors can find information on women & diabetes. From general facts to specific topics, diabetes.org is a great resource.

It also provides information on the Association's annual signature events -- America's Walk for Diabetes and Tour de Cure. Visitors can also sign up for a variety of free e-newsletters to keep subscribers up to date on the latest diabetes information.