Native Americans and Diabetes

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Studies show that Native Americans are most likely to get diabetes than any other race. There are two types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. Native people are most likely to get type 2 diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association.

The best way to avoid diabetes is to live a healthy lifestyle. That means eating right, taking long walks, jogging, running, drinking lots of water, and getting regular check-ups. You can also contact diabetes programs, like the American Diabetes Association, for more educational facts.

Diabetes patients are most likely to have other related diseases like high blood pressure, cerebrovascular disease, pneumonia and influenza. More serious cases can lead to kidney disease and dialysis. In fact, many untreated cases of diabetes often lead to death or amputation of limbs.

Native Americans also get diabetes 2.8 times more likely than other non-Native Americans. Diabetes can be hereditary but can also be caused by poor diet and lack of exercise. Early Native Americans did not have diabetes and it is suggested by some tribal elders and medical professionals that the introduction of foreign foods to their diet contributed to diabetes. Foreign foods, like sugar and bleached wheat, are not traditional foods like the Native Americans ate long time ago.

According to the National Diabetes Education Program, diabetes contributes to several of the leading causes of death in Native Americans. It is known that in the past, type 2 diabetes was rarely in children and adolescents. Type 2 is more common in Native American children under age 10 in recent years, according to new studies.

Dr. Leander “Russ” McDonald, an associate professor at the University of North Dakota and author of “The Effect of Geographic Region Age, and Chronic Disease on the Functional Status of Native American and Alaskan Native Elders,” says that Native elders in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota have the second highest rate in diabetes across America and these states have a high population of Native Americans.

Native Americans need to be aware of prevention on diabetes. A healthy diet, exercise and being informed are key to prevention.