



News for Immediate Release

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Importance of Health Screenings Highlighted during World Diabetes Day

Harrisburg – The Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Pennsylvania Diabetes Action Partnership are urging Pennsylvanians to take control of their health by being screened for diabetes, an often preventable disease and Pennsylvania's seventh-leading cause of death.

The two organizations came together to host a World Diabetes Day event in the capitol today, along with PinnacleHealth. The Department of Health staff offered awareness activities and educational materials including diabetes fact sheets and recipe books, while PinnacleHealth provided free screenings for cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar and diabetic neuropathy.

The event included Acting Secretary of Health Michael Wolf reading a proclamation from Governor Tom Corbett declaring November as Diabetes Awareness Month and Nov. 14 as World Diabetes Day. Keynote speaker, NBA Hall of Famer Bob Lanier, then spoke about his own battle with Type 2 diabetes and the importance of raising awareness about the disease.

"Diabetes rates are on the rise nationwide, and more than 900,000 Pennsylvanians are affected by this disease," Wolf said. "Recognizing symptoms of diabetes and early detection can decrease the chance of developing complications associated with the disease."

Diabetes is a chronic disease that can occur in two forms. If the pancreas does not produce insulin, it results in Type 1 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body is not producing enough insulin and/or the body cannot use the insulin that is produced. Insulin is a hormone that helps convert sugar and starches from food into energy.

Although the cause of diabetes is uncertain, genetics and lifestyle factors, such as obesity and a lack of exercise, can play a role. Diabetes can be prevented or delayed by healthy eating habits and regular exercise. For those who already have diabetes, it is important to manage the disease by monitoring what you eat, exercising often, testing blood sugar regularly, and taking medication as prescribed.

Of the nearly 26 million Americans with diabetes, an estimated seven million people are undiagnosed. In addition, an estimated 79 million adults have pre-diabetes, placing them at increased risk for developing the disease. Symptoms may include

frequent urination, unusual thirst, extreme hunger, unusual weight loss, extreme fatigue and irritability, frequent infections, blurred vision, and cuts or bruises that are slow to heal.

The Department of Health is also participating in the International Diabetes Federation's Blue Monument Challenge by lighting the state capitol building in blue lights from Nov. 14 -30. The goal is to raise awareness throughout the world by projecting the symbolic color chosen to represent diabetes.

To learn more about your risk for developing Type 2 diabetes, take the diabetes risk test or visit the American Diabetes Association's website at www.diabetes.org/risktest.

For more information about diabetes in Pennsylvania, visit www.health.state.pa.us/diabetes.

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