

Wellness Ways

Step up to the Challenge – Start Training Now for Stride4Stroke

On your marks, get set – GO! The Methodist Hospital System has set March 8, 2008, for its second annual Stride4Stroke 5K (3.1 miles) walk and run at Rice University. With four months training time, corporate Houston has a chance to start signing up for sponsorships and start forming teams to encourage employees to get and stay fit and help Methodist spread the word about stroke awareness and prevention.

More than 700,000 Americans suffer a stroke every year – it is the third leading cause of death and the top cause of long-term disability in people over 65. The threat of a stroke is 2 ½ times higher in men and women with diabetes than it is for people without the disease.

Top on the list of preventive measures to stop stroke are exercise and healthy diets. Even if you've never entered a 5K, the four months lead time is enough to build up mileage and muscles and step up to the Stride4Stroke challenge. Start walking now around your neighborhood; encourage your company to participate; challenge your co-workers to form a team.

Last year, Stride4Stroke attracted nearly 2,000 runners and walkers and raised \$400,000 for stroke education and awareness.

For more information on becoming a corporate sponsor or creating a corporate team ~
Amanda Pilcher, 832-667-5839 or
apilcher@tmhs.org.

To schedule a Methodist stroke speaker to help educate employees in your workplace, call or e-mail
Jan Flewelling at 713-441-4883 or
jflewelling@tmhs.org.

The 2008 race will be timed with computer chips so you'll get an accurate account of your performance. And, the Rice azaleas are especially beautiful in early March.

Diabetes Considered World Epidemic

World leaders set a precedent last year by passing a United Nations resolution declaring diabetes a “chronic, debilitating and costly disease” and a global health threat. The historic agreement – the first time a non-infectious disease garnered such attention – set Nov. 14, 2007, as World Diabetes Day and declared it a United Nations Day annually starting this year.

Diabetes awareness campaigns are now at an all-time high, but the number of people with diabetes is also growing. Worldwide, an estimated 246 million people have the disease and statistics are expected to soar to more than 380 million people in less than 15 years. The American Diabetes Association says one in four Americans has the disease or is at risk of getting it.

It is one of the world's top five killers and has no known cure.

When awareness, advanced screening techniques and improved imaging tools are lowering stats in other disease categories, why is diabetes bucking the trend? One explanation lies in modern lifestyles. With information at our fingertips and fast fatty food easily available around the clock, most people move less and eat more, especially the wrong kinds of food.

World Diabetes Day is a wake-up call to get informed and learn how to help ourselves and our loved ones recognize, prevent and seek proper treatment for the disease.

Two major forms of diabetes account for most cases. Type 1, known as juvenile diabetes or insulin-dependent diabetes, is usually discovered in children or teens. Type 1 diabetes represents only 5 to 10 percent of cases and occurs when the body's immune system destroys the pancreas' ability to make insulin, the hormone that transports glucose from food into the body's cells. Type 2 diabetes – often called adult onset diabetes – represents 90 to 95 percent of cases and shows up at first as insulin resistance when the body fails to use insulin properly. Gradually, the pancreas loses its ability to produce insulin. Its nickname is a misnomer since more children are being diagnosed today with Type 2 diabetes.

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Diabetes Considered World

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Without insulin, glucose from the food we eat and from the liver and muscles can't get into the body's cells and stays in the blood. Many patients' first sign of diabetes or pre-diabetes is "high blood sugar," a higher than normal blood glucose level. Sometimes the blood test is the only indication of diabetes. **Some physical warning signs to check with a doctor include:**

- **Tingling or loss of feeling in the feet**
- **Frequent urination**
- **Extreme and frequent thirst**
- **Weight loss without effort**
- **Feelings of being very hungry or tired**
- **Slow-healing sores**
- **Itchy, dry skin**
- **Blurry eyesight**

According to the National Centers for Disease Control, risks for Type 1 diabetes may be linked to genetic, environmental or autoimmune factors with no known ways of prevention. Risk factors for Type 2 diabetes include obesity, sedentary lifestyle, smoking and high blood pressure and cholesterol. Older age, a family history and ethnicity are also factors. African Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, American Indians and some Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians are at higher risk for Type 2 diabetes.



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Do You Know Your A1C?

Coming soon to your living room TV screen are public service ads with a twist. There's one vignette where a scruffy-looking character drives up to a pretty suburban house and interrupts a man packing his car for vacation.

"Excuse me. What time are you guys leaving? We're going to rob your house tonight."

Another scene shows a woman about to approach a cute little dog in her neighborhood. "Don't come closer," the dog says. "I have rabies."

The punchline has an unlikely topic: diabetes. "Don't you wish there were warnings to protect you from life's risks? With diabetes, there is one. It's called A1C, a simple blood test that helps measure your risk of a heart attack and other complications."

These offbeat ads – in both English and Spanish – by the Ad Council, the American Diabetes Association, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the American Association of Diabetes Educators and the National Council of La Raza are designed to surprise and make viewers do a doubletake.

What is an A1C and why is it important? The blood test measures a person's blood glucose level over the past three months. People with diabetes and even pre-diabetes should know their levels and strive to maintain their A1C at less than 7 percent. The higher the number, the more serious their risk for heart attack, stroke or other serious health complications.

The National Institutes of Health advises that diabetes patients get an A1C test twice annually and also practice self-monitoring of blood glucose (SMBG) control. The home method requires a drop of blood and a meter to measure glucose levels in real time. The combination of these two important tests can help patients' doctors manage their diabetes and get a clearer, more accurate portrait of how the current health plan is working.

Exercise, eating the right foods in the right amounts and taking prescribed diabetes medications can keep the A1C at normal levels, cut the risk of heart attack and other life-threatening health incidents and lead to a better quality of life.

One last vignette from the diabetes ad campaign: a couple in a restaurant asks the waitress what looks good. "Our special of the day is shrimp scampi," she replies with a big smile. "It's been sitting around about a week." Thanks for the warning.

For more information about diabetes and the A1C, visit www.diabetesA1C.org.