



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

Berrien County Health Department Promoting Diabetes Awareness in Recognition of National Diabetes Month

Benton Harbor, Michigan, Nov. 1, 2023 – November is National Diabetes Month, and the Berrien County Health Department is encouraging community members to be aware of warning signs and take steps to manage this disease.

Diabetes develops when a person's blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. If diabetes goes unmanaged, it can damage the eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart. It also is linked to some types of cancer. Diabetes affects 1.15 million Michigan adults and an undetermined number of children, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, or MDHHS.

National Diabetes Month is an annual observance when communities across the country seek to bring attention to the disease. This year's focus is taking action to prevent diabetes health problems, such as eating healthy meals and being physically active.

"National Diabetes Month is a good opportunity for community members to assess their health, reach out to the Berrien County Health Department or their health care provider to discuss any concerns and take steps to live a healthier lifestyle," Health Officer Guy Miller said. "We know healthy eating and regular exercise can help reduce the risk for certain types of diabetes.

"For community members living with diabetes, this serves as an important reminder to manage the disease so they can live long and healthy lives – and prevent additional health issues. Controlling diabetes is a critical step to reducing any health risks associated with the disease."

Diabetes symptoms can include:

- Urinating a lot, especially while sleeping.
- Significant thirst and hunger.
- Weight loss without trying.
- Blurred vision.
- Numb or tingling hands or feet.
- Significant fatigue.

- Very dry skin.
- Sores that heal slowly.
- More infections than usual.

For community members with diabetes, BCHD and MDHHS offer the following tips for managing the disease:

- Manage your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Take steps toward healthy habits, including planning healthy meals, being physically active, getting enough sleep and avoiding smoking.
- Reach or maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight or obese, ask your health care provider if healthy eating, physical activity or other weight-loss treatments may help manage your weight.
- Get a dilated eye exam at least once a year and share the results with your health care provider. Visit an eye professional right away if you see little black lines or spots that do not go away, see any red spots or a red fog, have a sudden change in how clearly you see or take longer than usual to adjust to darkness.
- Check your feet every day for calluses, cuts, sores, blisters, red spots and swelling. Wash them every day with warm water and dry them well, including between your toes.
- Get a dental exam once or more a year and take care of your teeth at home, brushing with a soft-bristled toothbrush two or more times a day and flossing at least once a day.
- Take your medicines on time.
- Take care of your mental health. If you feel down, sad or overwhelmed, talk with your health care provider about mental health resources or visit berriencounty.org/1697/Mental-Health.

BCHD offers free [hearing and vision screenings](#) for school-age children in Berrien County as well as a list of eye care providers who accept Medicaid health insurance.

BCHD hosts the [Benton Harbor Farmers Market](#) each week in the summer, providing community members with a wide variety of delicious locally grown produce at affordable prices. It also provides resources for [smoking cessation](#).

For more information about diabetes and additional resources, visit the MDHHS [website](#).

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