



## Resources for Faith Leaders and Health Ministers

### Faith Communities Making a Difference in Diabetes

Diabetes is serious, common and costly. But it can be managed, and type 2 diabetes can be prevented. Your faith community can make a difference in the lives of your members who have diabetes or are at risk for diabetes, and their families.

This guide shows you how you can make a difference by:

- Raising awareness about diabetes.
- Conducting diabetes prevention and management activities.
- Creating a healthy environment for your members.

It has suggestions for ways your faith community can get involved in taking action on diabetes, and links to resources to help you get started.

Use the activities and resources in this guide to start making a difference in diabetes for your faith community.

#### What is diabetes prevention and management?

People who are at increased risk for type 2 diabetes can **prevent** or delay diabetes by losing 5 to 7 percent of their weight, if they are overweight—that's 10 to 14 pounds for a 200-pound person. To do this they should get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity 5 days a week, eat a variety of foods that are low in fat, and reduce the number of calories they eat each day.

Diabetes **management** helps people who have type 1 or type 2 diabetes reduce their chances for complications. People can manage their diabetes by learning more about diabetes and about self-care behaviors, including how to manage their blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure and getting regular health care. People with diabetes and their families may also need help dealing with the emotional side of living with diabetes.

## Raise Awareness about Diabetes

As a trusted leader in your community, you can bring attention to the issue of diabetes. People may not understand their risk for diabetes. Some people may not believe that there is anything they can do to lower their chances of getting diabetes. Help your members get the facts and motivate them to start making changes to take care of their health.

**Talk with your members about diabetes.** Include messages in communications with members. For example, newsletters, bulletins, sermons or lessons, and announcements.

**Get involved in diabetes awareness activities.** Organizations like the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) regularly sponsor campaigns to raise awareness of diabetes. These organizations provide tools and resources to help you spread the word about diabetes among your members and in your community.



**Participate in community coalitions that address diabetes, obesity and other health issues.** Participating in coalitions is a way to bring resources to your members and help make a difference in the community. Check with local community-based organizations, your state and local health departments, and health care organizations for coalitions that are active in your community.

**Provide diabetes prevention and management resources.** Provide a table or bulletin board with trustworthy, easy-to-read information about diabetes.

[Click here to read more about how the leaders of faith communities are raising awareness of diabetes.](#)

Click the links below for resources you can give people who are at risk for diabetes or who have diabetes.

- **Resources for People at Risk for Diabetes**
  - [Choose More Than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes](#)
  - [Small Steps. Big Rewards. Your Game Plan to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes](#)
  - [The National Diabetes Prevention Program](#) (lifestyle program proven to prevent/delay type 2 diabetes)
  
- **Resources for People with Diabetes**
  - [4 Steps to Manage Your Diabetes for Life](#)
  - [Tips to Help You Stay Healthy](#)
  - [Know Your Blood Sugar Numbers](#)
  
- **Resources to help you with Outreach and Promotion**
  - [American Diabetes Association Diabetes Alert Day](#)
  - [National Diabetes Education Program Quarterly Promotions](#)

## Conduct Diabetes Prevention and Management Activities

Simply knowing more about diabetes is not enough to help a person prevent or manage the disease. Your members must also learn skills that help them put knowledge into action. They need support to commit to lifestyle changes like losing weight, making healthy food choices and being more physically active. People with diabetes and their families also need social and emotional support to help them cope with the challenges of living with the condition.

**Host diabetes prevention and management activities at your house of worship.** Partner with community based organizations or health care organizations to provide educational activities at your place of worship.

**Develop your own ongoing health promotion activities.** You can hold workshops, cooking and physical activity classes. Organize teams to participate in community walk-a-thons and runs. If you do not already have an organized health program, think about starting one to plan ongoing activities for your members.



**Develop support groups for people with diabetes and their families.** The emotional side of dealing with a disease like diabetes is often overlooked. People with experience in providing pastoral care can lead support groups for people with diabetes and their family members. Peer counselors can also learn to lead support groups.

[Click here to read more about how faith communities are conducting diabetes activities.](#)

Click the links below for resources you can use to teach your members about diabetes.

- **Diabetes Prevention Resources**
  - [The Road to Health Toolkit](#)
  - [The National Diabetes Prevention Program](#) (lifestyle program proven to prevent/delay type 2 diabetes)
  
- **Diabetes Management Resources**
  - New Beginnings: A Discussion Guide for Living Well with Diabetes
  - [Project Power](#) (American Diabetes Association)

## Create a Healthy Environment for Your Members

Creating a healthy environment means giving people a chance to make healthy choices. It is one of the most important things you can do to support your members who are trying to make changes. It helps everyone by making the healthy choice the easy choice.

**Make sure there are healthy choices whenever food is served.** Healthy choices include fruits and vegetables, and foods that are low in added sodium and fat, and high in fiber. Make sure people can choose water instead of drinks with lots of sugar like punch or non-diet soda pop. Offer children water instead of sugary drinks.



**Include healthy options in your outreach programs.** Suggest healthy donations people can offer to your food pantry, meal and snack programs for children, seniors, and sick and shut-in programs.

**During long meetings and events, make sure there are physical activity breaks that encourage people to move around.** Make active games a part of picnics, celebrations and other gatherings.

**Offer your building and grounds for physical activity programs.** You can host walking clubs and aerobics, dance, stretching, and chair exercise classes. Include physical activity in your youth programs. Promote your physical activity programs to the whole community.

**Develop church policies about healthy foods and drinks, and physical activity.** Formal policies show your commitment to health and help members understand what they should be serving.

**Create a garden or partner with a local farmer's market.** A garden is good way for members to get some physical activity and provide vegetables to the community.

[Click here to learn more about how faith communities are creating healthier environments.](#)

Click the links below to for resources to help you create a healthy environment.

- [Cooperative Extension Service](#) (Master Gardner Program)
- [Cooperative Extension Service Farmer's Market Information](#)
- [The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase Physical Activity in the Community](#)
- [The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase the Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables](#)
- [United States Department of Agriculture The People's Garden](#)

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### National Diabetes Education Program

For more information call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

TTY 1-(888) 232-6348 or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/info>.

To order resources, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/ndep>.



## Preaching Diabetes Awareness New York Faith Leaders Bring Spirit to the Fight Against Diabetes

Reverend Michel Faulkner, founder of New Horizon Church in Harlem, New York City, likes to keep his Sunday sermons simple. So when it comes to talking to his congregation about the blessing of good health, he tells people with diabetes that managing their disease is as easy as 1-2-3: know your diabetes numbers, know how to manage your numbers, and know how to reduce your numbers.

Reverend Faulkner understands that raising awareness about diabetes prevention and management is a “natural niche” for faith communities. In fact, New Horizon Church established Faith Fights Diabetes using a three-year grant from the New York State Health Foundation and building on a partnership with the Institute for Leadership. To date, the initiative has sparked more than 160 programs designed to spread “diabetes information awareness” throughout New York.

“More than 250 community health workers are the heart and soul of the programs,” says Reverend Faulkner. As trained educators and counselors, the community health workers help people understand the importance of physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight to prevent or delay the onset of diabetes. “People have to make a commitment to change and make it last,” offers Reverend Faulkner. “People must invest in themselves.”

Faith leaders in New York, and all across the country, are blending guidance, comfort, and support to church members with messages about health, and diabetes in particular. They tailor their sermons to incorporate health topics. And when the topic is diabetes, they offer screenings after services. Some pastors are literally taking diabetes education a step further by being more physically active themselves. Leading by example also includes requesting healthy foods at church picnics, meetings, and events and supporting diabetes education by other community organizations. “We have to champion this cause,” says Reverend Faulkner. “If we ratchet up the conversation and be aggressive, we can help people make lasting and ongoing changes.”

### Believing in the Power to Prevent Diabetes

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that nearly 26 million Americans have diabetes. An estimated 79 million Americans have prediabetes, which puts them at increased risk for type 2 diabetes. Diabetes can lead to serious complications like heart disease. “We understand the urgency to inform our congregation,” says Reverend Faulkner. “As trusted community engagers, people *want* to take our advice.”

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The National Diabetes Education Program provides free resources to help congregations and community organizations work with their members to prevent or manage diabetes.

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**National Diabetes Education Program NDEP**

A program of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Putting Faith in Prevention *Memphis Churches Build Trust to Tackle Diabetes*

Although Sheilah Easterling-Smith's title is "navigator," her job never takes her out of Memphis, Tennessee. Sheilah is a community caseworker for the Congregational Health Network (CHN). She assists people with diabetes as they navigate the challenges of managing the disease. Sheilah and other navigators work to improve connections between Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare hospitals and nearly 500 congregations and faith communities in the Memphis area. They take a team approach to improving the health of church members, which often means helping churches include diabetes education in their programs.

People at risk for type 2 diabetes can prevent or delay the disease by making healthy food choices, being physically active, and losing 5% to 7% of their body weight if they are overweight. Many faith communities have priorities that fit well with providing the education, motivation, and social support members need to make such lifestyle changes. "CHN helps establish partnerships between community-based organizations and congregations to improve access to health care and create a system of trust," says Sheilah.

CHN offers churches resources to help members understand their risk for diabetes and identify the steps they can take to prevent or delay the disease and its complications. The [Road to Health Toolkit](#) is one of these important resources. The [Toolkit](#) is from the [National Diabetes Education Program](#) features simple, effective tools and resources that teach people how to make changes in their diet and physical activity. It is available in English and Spanish. "Congregations have incorporated the toolkit's messages into sermons, presentations by CHN navigators, and special diabetes days," says Sheilah.

During diabetes days, churches conduct blood glucose screenings and hold workshops to educate members about blood glucose management and living with diabetes. Participants get moving with fun physical activities and can take cooking classes where they learn how to prepare healthy, satisfying dishes. "At diabetes days, we also distribute bags from the American Diabetes Association with brochures, helpful hints, and even samples of healthy treats," Sheilah notes.

Many faith communities sponsor support groups for people with diabetes and their families. Managing diabetes can take an emotional, social, and psychological toll on those with the disease and their family members. The groups offer support in a familiar and safe environment to help people cope and adopt healthy behaviors. Sheilah adds, "If a church member is hospitalized, CHN navigators notify the congregation. In this unique collaboration, the congregation becomes part of the health care team, blending the strengths of the congregation and the health facility to best support the person with diabetes."

### **Diabetes: A Nation at Risk**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that almost 26 million Americans have diabetes. About 7 million of these people do not know they have diabetes. An estimated 79 million Americans have prediabetes, which can lead to type 2 diabetes. Diabetes is a serious disease that can cause heart disease, blindness and many other health problems.

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The National Diabetes Education Program provides the *Road to Health Toolkit* and many other free resources to help congregations and community organizations work with their members to prevent or manage diabetes.

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## How Does Your Garden Grow? *In Michigan, with Healthy Foods All in a Row*

When Sister Lillie Perdue was diagnosed with diabetes, she was told she would wind up on dialysis if she did not change her lifestyle. That motivated her to take action—from the ground up. She launched a garden project to make fresh fruits and vegetables more available not only to herself but to other members of Bethlehem Temple Church in Flint, Michigan.

Sister Lillie had the support of the church's pastor, District Elder Phillip Thomas, and received grants from local organizations to help the garden project take root. Bethlehem Temple Church donated two city lots and water. Additional support and gardening tools came from Edible Flint, a partnership of residents and public and private organizations that promotes growing and access to healthy food. Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service and the Salem Housing Project rounded out the roster of groups that pitched in to make the garden a reality.

"The garden now routinely provides fresh fruits and vegetables for 20 to 30 church members," says Sister Lillie. "This project has helped them recognize the importance of eating healthy and taking control of their health." One of those members is Sharon Saddler, who learned she had diabetes at a church-sponsored health fair. Since becoming a church gardener about three years ago, Sharon has experienced the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables and getting regular physical activity. Her cholesterol, blood glucose, and blood pressure have all returned to normal levels.

The garden project even has sprouted ways to reinforce healthy eating and physical activity habits for church members at home. With a grant from the Crim Fitness Foundation, through the Safe and Active Genesee [County] for Everyone (SAGE) project, Bethlehem Temple Church offers weekly classes that cover gardening skills, personal responsibility, self-esteem, and community responsibility. "Every participant does some type of gardening at home, whether it's a full backyard garden or just a small potted plant," says Sharon.

Faith communities everywhere can plant the seeds of change to help members prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Healthy lifestyles can bloom when the members of these communities:

- Make healthy choices available at events where food is served. The menu should include fruits and vegetables, high-fiber foods, and foods that are low in sodium and fat.
- Offer healthy options in food pantries and meal and snack programs for children, seniors, the sick, and shut-ins.
- Schedule physical activity breaks during long meetings and events.
- Partner with a local farmer's market to get healthy produce to more members.
- Update formal policies to show a commitment to healthy foods and drinks and physical activity.

### **Dig in to Fight Diabetes**

People at risk for type 2 diabetes can prevent or delay the disease by making healthy food choices and being more physically active. These simple lifestyle changes also can lower their chances of complications such as heart disease. But healthy choices are not always easy. People need access to healthy foods and chances to be active. Faith communities can make a difference with garden projects that yield healthy food options plus give gardeners a feel-good outdoor workout.



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