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What is prediabetes?

This month, the “Take Charge of Your Health Today” page focuses on prediabetes. Bee Schindler, community engagement coordinator with the University of Pittsburgh's Clinical and Translational Science Institute, and Esther B. Bush, professor and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, speak about this topic:

BSS: Good morning, Mrs. Bush. I thank you for the chance to talk with you about prediabetes, a condition that affects folks whose blood sugar level is higher than normal but is not at the level used as a diagnosis for type II diabetes.

EB: Yes, Bee. This is a very important topic. According to the CDC, 30 percent of people who have prediabetes are unaware that they have it and, therefore, miss a critical window of time to make change. Those who are overweight or obese are at a much higher risk of developing prediabetes. Checking with your health care provider is a good start in finding out your risk for developing prediabetes.

BS: Absolutely! Catching prediabetes before it develops into type II diabetes can mean reducing the risk if it ever entering heart disease, having a stroke or developing kidney and eye problems, according to Dr. Dorothy Becker, professor of pediatrics, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and director of the Diabetes Program, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

EB: Knowledgeable about the evolution of prediabetes to diabetes has mostly been done with white people—a problem when you consider the difference in whether or not you develop diabetes in non-white people. The only way we're going to be able to make treatment plans relevant to them and knowing whether or not they have it is a benchmark for diagnosing type II diabetes.

BS: Right—research shows that prediabetes is reversible. Finding ways that can help you make healthier choices, keeping off excess weight and exercise are three ways to help improve the difference in whether or not you develop diabetes.