About Us

Registered dietitians work to improve the health of all Americans through access to healthy food and nutrition services. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) is a non-partisan group representing 72,000 members nationwide. We are the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals.

We Ask You to Support the Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act

This bill would amend the Social Security Act to extend Medicare coverage for Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) services for persons with prediabetes and risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes. Under current law, Medicare covers MNT provided by a registered dietitian (RD) only for beneficiaries with diabetes and renal disease. The Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act would allow people with prediabetes to access MNT services from an RD, giving them the necessary tools to help prevent the development of type-2 diabetes – a very costly disease.

What is Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT)?

Medical Nutrition Therapy is a nutritional diagnostic, therapy and counseling service for disease management. When provided by a registered dietitian, MNT includes: 1) lifestyle, knowledge and skills assessment, 2) negotiation of individualized nutrition goals, 3) nutrition intervention, and 4) evaluation of clinical and behavioral outcomes. To ensure an individualized therapeutic plan, MNT is conducted through one-on-one sessions between an RD and an individual. MNT provided by an RD is similar to the one-on-one counseling provided during national trials that were found to prevent diabetes; people receiving MNT have shown successful weight loss and improved prediabetes insulin markers.¹

Is Diabetes Really a Problem in the US?

Currently almost 1 out of 10 people in the US, or 25.8 million people, have diabetes, and approximately 79 million more have prediabetes.² The diabetes burden among people over age 65 is staggering: More than 7 out of 10 people eligible for Medicare have diabetes or prediabetes.² In the US, diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, amputation and blindness, and it results in higher risk of premature death, cardiovascular disease, and nerve disease.³

Key Takeaways

- Over one-quarter of the Medicare-eligible population (10.9 million Americans over the age of 65) have diabetes, and 50 percent have prediabetes.
- The total cost of diabetes to our health care system in 2007 was estimated to be $174 billion.
- Research shows that diabetes is preventable in people exposed to diet and exercise lifestyle modification programs, particularly among people over the age of 60.
- Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) provided by a dietitian is an effective evidence-based practice that can result in weight loss, obesity prevention and improved prediabetes insulin markers which are the same essential outcomes of other diabetes prevention programs.⁴⁻⁻¹⁻¹⁻¹
- The Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act will allow Medicare to reimburse RDs to provide MNT to patients at risk of diabetes or with prediabetes, in addition to patients with diabetes and renal disease.

¹ Corpeleign E. et al. (2006). Improvements in glucose tolerance and insulin sensitivity after lifestyle intervention are related to changes in serum fatty acid profile and desaturase activities: The SLIM study. Diabetologia. 49(10):2392-2401.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
Can Diet and Exercise Lifestyle Modification Programs Prevent Diabetes?

In 2002, the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) showed that participation in a diet and exercise lifestyle intervention for three years could result in a 71% decrease in the number of new cases of diabetes compared to a control group for people age 60-85. Then in 2009, the DPP showed that 10 years after the start of the program, there was still a 49% decrease in the number of new cases of diabetes compared to a control group. People participated in the program for only a few years, but the benefits extended for a decade.

Medical Nutrition Therapy is a part of successful diet and exercise lifestyle modification. Research shows that MNT provided by a dietitian is an effective evidence-based practice that can result in weight loss, obesity prevention and improved prediabetes insulin markers which are the same essential outcomes of other diabetes prevention programs.

How Much Does Diabetes Cost Our Healthcare System and Economy?

The total cost of diabetes to our health care system in 2007 was estimated to be $174 billion, including $116 billion in excess medical expenditures and $58 billion in reduced national productivity. These costs translate to 15 million work days absent, 120 million work days with reduced performance, and 107 million work days lost due to unemployment disability as a result of diabetes. While the average yearly health care costs for a person without diabetes is $2,560, the same figure for a person with diabetes is a shocking $11,744. One out of every five federal health care dollars is spent treating people with diabetes.

Diet and exercise lifestyle modification programs have consistently been shown to be cost-effective and even cost saving methods for preventing and treating diabetes in participants, meaning that compared to other treatment options such as medication, diet and exercise lifestyle modification programs gives the payer (Medicare) the best return on investment.

View of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics on the Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics supports the Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act, and is urging members of Congress to co-sponsor and/or pass the bill. By co-sponsoring and voting for the bill, members of Congress would ensure that patients with diabetes, prediabetes, renal disease, and patients at risk for diabetes would have access to preventive treatment and medical nutrition therapy.

The Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act is a bipartisan bill that was introduced in the 112th Congress by Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY). The bill is expected to be re-introduced in the 113th Congress soon.

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12 Ibid.