

One in every three Americans has prediabetes – that’s 86 million people. Further, more than 25 percent of Americans over age 65 have type 2 diabetes. In the United States, 23 percent of teens have prediabetes or diabetes. The numbers are staggering.

There are no clear symptoms of prediabetes. You may have it and not know it. In fact, 90 percent of those people who will be diagnosed with prediabetes are unaware.

Those more at risk for developing [type 2 diabetes](#) are overweight, spend a lot of time lying or sitting, have a parent or sibling with diabetes, are over age 45, had gestational diabetes, or are African-American, Hispanic, Native American or Asian-American.

“Having diabetes is like having a part-time job you never applied for, but now you have to deal with it, and there’s no weekends or holidays off,” warned Sherri Schlatter, a Diabetes Nurse Educator at OSF HealthCare Saint James – John W. Albrecht Medical Center in Pontiac. She continued, “Diabetes is there every day.”

Studies show that we have the power to halt the progression from prediabetes to diabetes with healthy lifestyle changes.

“There’s research that has shown that if people lose weight, if they lose five to seven percent of their body weight, or if they get more physically active, they can actually turn that cycle around,” said Schlatter.

However, making major lifestyle changes can be tough. To help people find their way to a diabetes-free future, OSF Saint James started to offer a free Diabetes Prevention Program.

As a group, participants in the year-long program learn to eat healthy, add physical activity to their lives, stay motivated, and solve problems that may get in their way of healthy changes.

Six months into the program, the first group of participants has lost more than 200 pounds and has combined for more than 61,000 minutes of physical activity.

Vicki Trainor is part of that inaugural group. She has a family history of diabetes, and had gestational diabetes with her third child. She says she was on her way to a diabetic future, and jumped at the chance for change.

“When this program came along, it was just meant for me. It’s sessions where we talk about diet, exercise, and the stress that goes along with making lifestyle changes. It’s just been a great support system.”

The program runs weekly for 16 weeks, then monthly for the rest of the year. Participants privately weigh in and report their minutes of physical activity at each meeting. The goal is slow and steady change, with the help of a built-in support system.

“It doesn’t happen overnight. It is a change. So when you have to do some changes, it does take time. And the support from this group makes it a lot easier, because it’s a step-by-step. Every week you’re talking about a different topic, something new is brought up about how to make those changes, so you’re not just handed information and told to go do it.”

Prediabetes is usually found when tested for diabetes or having routine lab work that shows elevated glucose in the blood.

You may have prediabetes and be at risk for type 2 diabetes if you:

- Are 45 years of age or older
- Are overweight
- Have a family history of type 2 diabetes
- Are physically active fewer than three times per week
- Ever had diabetes while pregnant (gestational diabetes) or gave birth to a baby that weighed more than 9 pounds

A new session of the free Diabetes Prevention Program at OSF HealthCare Saint James is starting October 1. To learn more or to register, call (815) 842-4970.

For information on the OSF HealthCare Holy Family Medical Center Diabetes Prevention Program in Monmouth, call (309) 734-1424.