

DIABETES SPEAKS SOFTLY BUT CARRIES A BIG STICK

By: Melissa Jeremiah, RN

Director of Hoosier Uplands Home Health & Hospice

Ask people what November brings to mind and you will get answers that vary from Thanksgiving dinner with family and friends, the Friday after Thanksgiving shopping frenzy, deer hunting or college football. One thing that is overlooked is that November is American Diabetes Month. According to the American Diabetes Association there are 18.2 million people in the United States, or 6.3% of the population, who have diabetes. An estimated 13 million have been diagnosed with diabetes, unfortunately, that leaves 5.2 million people (or nearly one-third) that are unaware they have the disease. Through an initiative called "Make the Link! Diabetes, Heart

Disease and Stroke", the American Diabetes Association and the American College of Cardiology are teaming up to urge people with diabetes to learn how they can lower their chances for heart disease and stroke. You can go to www.diabetes.org/uedocuments/ChooseGuide.pdf or call 1-800-Diabetes (1-800-342-2383) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 7 p.m. (CST) to request a free "Diabetes Survival Guide" which was developed to give people with diabetes information on protecting themselves from diabetes-related complications, such as heart disease and stroke.

The main reason that diabetes goes undiagnosed is because many of its symptoms seem so harmless. Early detection and treatment of diabetes can help to decrease your chance of developing diabetic complications, such as heart disease and stroke.

What are the symptoms of diabetes?

Extreme thirst, frequent urination, dry skin, excessive hunger, blurred vision, fatigue, nausea, unexplained weight loss and irritability.

If you have one or more of these symptoms you should report them to your doctor or nurse practitioner. You can also go to www.diabetes.org to take an Online Diabetes Risk Test to find out if you are at risk for diabetes.