

## How Gardening Can Weed Out Diabetes

People with diabetes have a shortage of insulin or a decreased ability to use insulin, a hormone that allows glucose (sugar) to enter cells and be converted to energy. When diabetes is not controlled, glucose and fats remain in the blood and, over time, damage vital organs. Diabetes can cause heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure, pregnancy complications, lower-extremity amputations, and deaths related to flu and pneumonia.

Type 1 most often appears during childhood or adolescence. Type 2 diabetes, which is linked to obesity and physical inactivity, accounts for about 90 percent of diabetes cases and most often appears among people older than 40. However, it is no longer considered an adult-only disease. Type 2 is now being found at younger ages and is even being diagnosed among children and teens.

Diabetes has its greatest effects on the elderly, women, and certain racial and ethnic groups. One in five adults over age 65 has diabetes. African American, Hispanic, Native American, and Alaska Native adults are **two to three times** more likely than white adults to have diabetes.

How does gardening tie in? First of all, gardening and yard work is an excellent form of exercise, building strength and muscle mass. As a weight-bearing exercise, gardening not only burns calories, it is good for the bones, too. Listen up ladies, we have another tool against osteoporosis.

Yes, studies show that exercise and diet can dramatically reduce the development of type 2 diabetes in those at risk for the disease. As for people who have the disease, "It was once thought that people with diabetes could not withstand vigorous physical exercise. This is no longer believed to be true," says Stanley Gershoff, Ph.D. and author of *The Tufts University Guide to Total Nutrition*. "Indeed, exercise ranks as one of the most effective ways of normalizing high blood sugar levels."

To properly deal with vigorous exercise, says Gershoff, is to carefully time exercise, meals and insulin doses, or for less vigorous exercise, such as gardening and for those with diabetes who are not on insulin, regular exercise does not have to be timed as carefully.

As to food and diet, many experts blame the increased love of fast foods for the rise in obesity and diabetes. But we all have choices. You don't need to be a rocket

scientist to know that the fewer processed foods we consume, the healthier our diet will be.

Fresh foods, such as fruits and vegetables, are better for you than canned and processed ones. Remember the closer you eat to the source (where food is actually grown), the healthier the food. You can't argue the fact that apples, berries, onions and lettuce grown or harvested in your own neighborhood are nutritionally superior than foodstuffs that traveled 1,000 miles to get to your table.

Now the amazing clincher: You can grow more of your own food and you and your family will be healthier for it. (In addition to enjoying better food, there are many reasons to grow your own, including saving money!). Remember, **healthy food** begins with **healthy soil**. Learn what grows well in your area. Incorporate organic gardening methods. Learn about compost, weeding without chemicals, soil pH, and the best ways to use manure and kelp in the garden.

And healthy soil means healthy plants, which means a healthier diet. Yes, you **can** do it!

To learn more or participate in the community garden, contact Jayden Fisher at the band office. Miigwetch.