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TYPE 2 DIABETES CAN BE PREVENTED BY EATING LESS AND MOVING MORE

ATLANTA (GA) – Thousands of Georgians are at risk for type 2 diabetes, a serious and costly disease that is becoming increasingly common throughout the state. The good news, according to health officials at the Georgia Department of Resources (DHR), is that it can be prevented.

“A recent study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health found that people who are at increased risk for type 2 diabetes can prevent or delay the onset of the disease by losing five to seven percent of their body weight through increased physical activity and a reduction in fat and calorie intake,” said Stuart Brown, M.D., director for DHR’s Division of Public Health.

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is necessary for the body to be able to use sugar. Sugar, or glucose, is the basic fuel for the cells in the body, and insulin takes the sugar from the blood into the cells. When glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells, it can cause serious health problems.

According to the American Diabetes Association, before people develop type 2 diabetes, they almost always have "pre-diabetes." Pre-diabetes is a condition where blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes.

"Because diabetes is a serious disease, it is important to educate Georgians that moderate lifestyle changes can lead to significant health improvements,” said Brown.

November is American Diabetes Month. Every November, DHR and the American Diabetes Association encourage people to get tested for diabetes. Symptoms of diabetes include frequent urination, excessive thirst, extreme hunger, increased fatigue, blurry vision, slow healing of wounds, frequent infections, irritability, tingling and numbness in hands and feet, and unusual weight loss or gain.

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“For every two people who know they have diabetes, there is a third person that doesn’t know s(he) has it,” said Brown. “We want to raise awareness of the symptoms of diabetes so that we can identify those Georgians who are undiagnosed. Anyone experiencing one or more of these symptoms should see a doctor and get tested immediately.”

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the state, killing more than 1,500 Georgians annually.

The Live Healthy Georgia campaign, launched in March 2005 by DHR and Governor Sonny Perdue, is designed to raise awareness about the risk factors associated with developing chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, and help people reduce their risk factors for those diseases. The campaign supports five key strategies: *Be Active, Eat Healthy, Be Smoke free, Get Checked and Be Positive.*

“Becoming more physically active and eating a healthy diet can help to manage and prevent diabetes as well as cardiovascular disease,” said Brown. "It is important to educate Georgians that moderate lifestyle changes can lead to significant health improvements. If we can get Georgians to be more active, we will see a decline in rates of diabetes and other chronic diseases. Regular physical activity can have a powerful and positive impact by making us healthier, relieving stress, and simply helping us feel better,” he said.

To learn more about the Live Healthy Georgia campaign, visit www.livehealthygeorgia.org.

The American Diabetes Association offers a free diabetes risk test, available at <http://www.diabetes.org/risk-test.jsp>.