



Church Tool Kit

Diabetes

Why should our church promote preventive health to the congregation?

Historically, the church has been a powerful voice in the community. Through the church, the community experiences a sense of identity and belonging to the larger society. Beyond that, the church as a whole has also been the vehicle by which its members receive quality information regarding many issues in the community, including health care. The church has been a place where its members can feel safe and can turn to trusted ministers and church leaders for guidance and education. Communities look to their pastors as leaders of faith, healers and teachers. Because of this, it is important to incorporate the church in educating the community about good health care and preventive health measures in order to change unhealthy patterns. As an influential voice in the community, the pastor has the opportunity to speak to the whole person regarding a holistic approach to life and community. Many communities of faith have decided to become actively involved in promoting good health and supporting a health ministry.

What is a tool kit?

A tool kit is a collection of materials that will provide tools to help you accomplish a goal. The goal of this church tool kit is to:

- Promote preventive health services to those members who have diabetes
- Provide information about lipid testing, eye exams and A1c tests
- Provide educational diabetes materials



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Why should we include information about diabetes in our congregation's programs and services?

Church leaders can play an important part in educating members of the congregation about diabetes.

A potentially debilitating disease, diabetes affects more than 16 million Americans (including about 3.2 million African-Americans and 2.5 million Latinos)¹ and kills more than 182,000 Americans each year.

People that have diabetes commonly downplay this disease as simply a “little touch of sugar.” But anyone who knows the truth about diabetes understands that is it much more serious than that. The following are some facts about diabetes:

- People with diabetes are at high risk for heart disease.
- Diabetes is a major challenge among certain racial and ethnic groups in which new cases of diabetes are rising dramatically. Vulnerable and high-risk populations include Hispanics/Latinos, the elderly and economically disadvantaged persons.
- Diabetes is the number one disease causing blindness, kidney problems and amputations in African-Americans.
- Diabetes is America's second most costly disease, behind mental disorders.
- One in four African-American women over age 55 and one in four African-American men between age 65 and 74 are affected.
- On average, Hispanics are about 1.9 times more likely to have diabetes than are non-Hispanic whites of similar age.
- Deaths due to diabetes are highest in Latinos, African-Americans and American Indians.

¹ American Diabetes Month and World Diabetes Day Fact Sheet. American Diabetes Association. <http://www.diabetes.org/communityprograms-and-localevents/americanidiabetesmonth.jsp>. Accessed Sept. 2007.



Church Tool Kit

Diabetes

What can we do to educate the congregation?

- Use one of the enclosed pulpit announcements.
- Make copies of the enclosed flyers for your congregation for distribution at each of your worship services and weekly meetings.
- Contact TMF if you have scheduled or would like to plan a health fair in your community. TMF can assist with educational materials and resources for your event.

Here are other ways to spread the word:

- Enlist the support of your minister – A successful health ministry will depend on a good working relationship and an understanding of your plans with the pastor.
- Identify a lead health minister, one who has the vision and energy to organize and keep the program going.
- Invite others who may be interested to a meeting. Use the resource packet to get ideas on how to present information about diabetes at the meeting.
- Conduct a church survey to find out about topics that are the most important to your church members.

Use available educational materials and resources so that you are prepared to respond to basic questions about diabetes. Go to www.diabetes.org and type in your ZIP code to find out about events planned by your local chapter of the American Diabetes Association.

What else can individual church members do?

In addition to a planned health activities and events, there are things individuals can do to promote healthy habits. Friends and family members with diabetes are more likely to get needed tests and develop other healthy habits if they are encouraged to do so by a close friend or relative.

Make it a point to speak to close friends and relatives who you know have diabetes.

- Tell them that you have heard how important it is to have the following tests:
 - A yearly or more often lipid (cholesterol) test to measure their risk for heart disease
 - A yearly dilated eye exam
 - An A1c test every three to six months to check their blood sugar. Also known as a glycated hemoglobin test, or HbA1c, this test gives a picture of the average blood sugar control level for the past two to three months
- Remind people on Medicare Part B who have diabetes that these services are covered. Ask them to check with their doctor and make sure they are getting the tests they need to manage the disease.
- Follow-up with your friends to see if they have followed your suggestions.



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What resources are available?

The following resources will assist in promoting your diabetes education effort:

Personnel

- Health care and medical professionals within your faith community who are knowledgeable about diabetes (physicians, nurses, health educators, social workers, etc.)
- Members who have diabetes and who can provide testimonials

Communication

- Church newsletter
- Bulletin boards, display areas in the church
- Announcement during or after church services
- Display tables at coffee hour after church or at other times when church members congregate



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Suggested Announcements to be Made from the Pulpit or to be Placed in Your our Church Bulletin

Announcement #1

Diabetes affects the lives of many in our congregation. It is an important time to do a self-check to know if you are also at risk. Some of the warning signs of diabetes are: weakness and tiredness, thirst, frequent trips to the restroom, weight loss, tingling in hands, legs, or feet, and blurred eyesight. Medicare Part B covers screening for diabetes. For more information contact the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

Announcement #2

If you or someone you love has diabetes, please remember these important tests for people with diabetes: a dilated eye exam every year; a cholesterol test, also known as a lipid test, every year; and a blood sugar test, also known as an A1c test, every three to six months. These services are covered under Medicare part B. [Refer your congregation to the flyer enclosed if you have made copies available.] For more information contact the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

Announcement #3

You can help your friends and loved ones with diabetes by providing the following tips to stay healthy. Tell them to get their lipid (cholesterol) test and their eyes checked every year. Remind them that they should see a doctor every three to six months to get their A1c (blood sugar) test. Let them know that Medicare Part B covers these important tests to stay healthy. For more information contact the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

Announcement #4

Diabetes affects the lives of many in our congregation. It is important to know some of the complications of this very debilitating disease.

- Heart disease and stroke
- Blindness
- Kidney disease
- Nerve problems and damage to the nervous system, which is the major cause of lower-limb amputation among people with diabetes
- Gum disease

There are tests and medications that help people manage their diabetes and avoid complications. Controlling blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol also reduce the possibility of complications. For more information contact the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)



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Sample Bulletin Insert

Make copies of the flyer included on the following pages to insert in your church bulletin. You can print two to a full page and cut in half.

TMF Health Quality Institute is the Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for people with Medicare in Texas. Each state in the country has a QIO working to protect Medicare patient rights and improve the quality of health care in each state. TMF promotes and provides education to people on Medicare about their preventive health benefits, rights and responsibilities under the Medicare program.



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