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State sounds alarm on diabetes risk

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About 330,000 adults in Wisconsin have diabetes, but 94,000 of them do not know it, according to the state's Diabetes Prevention and Control Program.

An estimated 4,000 children and adolescents in Wisconsin also have the disease.

Locally, nationally and internationally, health care leaders are trying to raise awareness of diabetes during November, which has been designated Diabetes Awareness Month by the state Senate, though the Assembly has not acted on it.

"This joint resolution highlights the diabetes epidemic: It encourages continued support for diabetes research, early screening and detection, and promotes the benefits of living a healthier lifestyle," said Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, who sponsored the resolution.

Diabetes -- a chronic metabolic disorder in which the body does not produce enough insulin or does not properly use it -- can damage blood vessels and nerves and lead to blindness, amputations, kidney failure, heart disease and death. It is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States.

Those at risk of having undiagnosed diabetes include the elderly, obese people and those with a sedentary lifestyle. African-Americans and American Indians also are at higher risk. About 19 percent of Wisconsin residents 65 and older have diabetes, according to the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program.

Wisconsin chapters of the American Diabetes Association, the Wisconsin Lions Foundation, Prevent Blindness Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians are all working to raise awareness.

The American Diabetes Association offers a diabetes risk test on its [Web site](#) in which users answer questions that help determine the probability of diabetes. But having blood sugar tested and consulting with a doctor is the best way to find out if you have the disease.

"Early screening and detection are very important in the diabetes fight," Risser said. "And a healthy diet and moderate weight loss can have a positive impact on the body's ability to fight off disease."

Nationally, 20.8 million people -- 7 percent of the U.S. population -- have diabetes, with 6.2 million of them undiagnosed. Another 54 million people have pre-diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association.

If current trends continue, one of every three Americans and one in two

minorities born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime, the association says.

Nationally, November has been recognized as American Diabetes Month, and the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution designating World Diabetes Day on Nov. 14.

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