

Embargo 12 July 2010

PREVENT type 2 diabetes AVOID kidney damage

Ninety per cent of Australians and 75 per cent of people with diabetes do not know that diabetes is a leading risk factor for kidney damage.

Diabetes Australia – Vic CEO Professor Greg Johnson said that the increasing number of people with diabetes related kidney damage was alarming. “Diabetes accounts for 34 per cent of new cases of end stage kidney disease and is a greater primary cause of kidney damage than excess alcohol consumption and smoking,” he said.

“Diabetes is the epidemic of the 21st century and the driver of premature death and serious complications including heart attack, stroke, kidney damage, blindness and amputation. This new campaign is about preventing type 2 diabetes and thereby avoiding kidney damage.”

“We know people with diabetes complications are ‘frequent flyers’ in the hospital system and that 32 per cent of preventable hospital admissions in Australia relate to diabetes and its complications.”

Professor Johnson said type 2 diabetes is a serious condition in its own right, but it’s a condition that can be prevented and managed. “Kidney disease is a debilitating condition that requires people to spend long periods of time undergoing dialysis.”

There are currently 10,000 Australians on dialysis which costs around \$1 billion a year. There are many more indirect costs including the cost of productivity in the workplace and personal quality of life costs that cannot be counted in monetary terms.

“Kidney damage impairs quality of life in terms of restricting freedom to eat and drink, as well as the more obvious limitations on lifestyle imposed by being attached to a dialysis machine several times a week.”

St Vincent’s Head of Nephrology, Associate Professor Robyn Langham, urged people with type 2 diabetes to have a kidney check at least once a year to detect early signs of kidney damage.

“Early detection of kidney damage is vital for people with diabetes,” she said. “A kidney check involves a simple blood test, a blood pressure test and a urine test, all of which can be done by your local doctor. Regular testing can help detect signs of early damage, allowing for timely treatment that can help to avoid long term serious kidney damage and the need for dialysis.”

Dialysis treatment has an enormous impact on the quality of life of the person who must undergo it. Most dialysis patients are required to connect to a dialysis machine three times a week for 4-5 hours at a time just to stay alive.

A dialysis machine takes the place of the kidneys to filter out wastes from the blood when they are no longer able to function properly. Treatment is very time consuming and many patients

find it difficult to continue working and often have to give up recreational activities as they spend so much time away from the home and family.

Fifty-five year old Michael Murray has had type 2 diabetes since he was 33 years old. His kidney function has been deteriorating for the past 10 years. He now needs to spend 15 hours every week on a dialysis machine to stay alive.

He said the necessity for thrice-weekly hospital visits has dramatically changed his life.

“I’ve had to give up my job, which I really miss. Dialysis also restricts me from going anywhere. I have to know that wherever I’m going, I can book in for regular dialysis treatment, otherwise I can’t travel.”

“When I was younger I was more concerned with having a good time than managing my diabetes,” Michael said. “If I had my time again I would do it so differently. I would watch my weight and be an all-round sportsman.”

Michael will be on dialysis for the rest of his life unless he gets a kidney transplant. The average wait time for a kidney is seven years.

Diabetes information:

Diabetes is a chronic disease with serious complications. It currently affects an estimated 1.7 million Australians, yet only half of these people know they have it. For every person diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, it is estimated there is another who is not yet diagnosed. 275 Australians develop diabetes every day.

As the number of Australians with type 2 diabetes increases, so too does the number with kidney damage. Over the past eight years the number of diabetes patients on dialysis has doubled.

Though classified as a chronic disease type 2 diabetes can often be prevented through an active lifestyle and by maintaining a healthy weight. Importantly, early detection and management of kidney damage can help prevent progressive loss of kidney function and subsequent need for dialysis.

Assess your risk of type 2 diabetes by visiting the website www.diabeteslife.org.au and completing the online risk assessment test or by ringing 1300 (RISK) 13 7475 or by visiting your doctor.

For more information and interview:

Professor Greg Johnson – Diabetes Australia Acting CEO

Associate Professor Robyn Langham – Head of Nephrology at St Vincent’s Hospital

Michael Murray – patient who has dialysis three times a week for 4-5 hours a time (15 hours a week)

For further information:

Lyn Curtis 0411 019 924 lcurtis@diabetesvic.org.au

Phoebe Bond 0424 072 054 pbond@dibatesvic.org.au