



By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times More than 25 million Americans are affected by diabetes, but research has shown that those who learn to manage their blood sugar levels, eat healthy and exercise regularly can lower their risk of complications and lead a healthier and more productive life.

Through a series of sessions, Seward County's K-State Research and Extension office will be helping local diabetics learn how to make some simple meals that will help them control blood sugar levels.

Dining with Diabetes is open to those with diabetes and their family members as well as people diagnosed with pre-diabetes. The program is in its third year, and K-State Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Kathy Bloom said the first two years, as well as this year's, have been well received.

"The program every year has an overwhelming response," she said. "That's why we continue to bring it back every year."

Dining with Diabetes includes four sessions with a three-month follow-up class. The classes will be given in both English and Spanish. Bloom said the class is being used as a tool for many medical professionals, and this has helped sessions fill up well in advance.

"We have some doctors that refer patients months before the workshop begins," she said. "We have some really good support from some of our local doctors."

Bloom said participants will also learn up-to-date information on nutrition, meal planning and exercise and how to understand common diabetes-related medical tests.

"We are going to have a doctor and a pharmacist on hand for the meetings," she said. "It's basic

information for people that are recently diagnosed or that are struggling with dealing with their condition. We have people every year that want to take it again just because it helps them refocus. We put people that have attended before on a waiting list and let new people come first."

Recipes and handouts will also be given to each participant.

"We have a variety of different food," Bloom said. "Our staff will be demonstrating how to make a chicken fajita salad. What we're really going to be working with on the food is portion control – try to teach everybody what a proper portion is. We all tend to make our portions much larger than they should be. We're really going to work with that on the meal and help people learn exactly what a portion is."

Along with the Extension, Dining with Diabetes is sponsored by Southwest Medical Center, United Methodist Mexican American Ministries, Great Western Dining Services, United Way and the Seward County Health Department.

The dates for this year's classes are Aug. 27 and 28, Sept. 5 and 6 and Nov. 13. Registration for this program can be made by calling the Extension office at 624-5604, e-mail at [sw@listserv.ksu.edu](mailto:sw@listserv.ksu.edu), fax at 624-0742 or stop by the office at 1081 Stadium Road.

There is no charge to attend Dining with Diabetes, but participants must attend all class sessions. Space is limited, and pre-registration is required.

"We are getting close to being full, but we do have spaces still," Bloom said. "If they want to sign up, they need to do it as soon as possible at our phone number."

The classes will take place at the Seward County Activity Center.

The K-State agent said diabetes does not just affect the person who has it, and for that reason, others can participate in Dining with Diabetes as well.

"They can bring a family member," she said. "It's a disease that affects the whole family. If they don't have it yet, often, they're on track to get it. We invite all family members."

The class is available to those outside of Seward County as well.

"It's open to the whole region," Bloom said. "We've had a lot of people from Oklahoma come up."

She said the number of cases of diabetes is expected to rise in the coming years.

"By 2015, they say one in three will be a diabetic," she said. "I think there are so many people that are undiagnosed. It's alarming how many people have it, but are undiagnosed. It sure doesn't hurt for everyone to be tested."

Bloom said participants will get a free A1C test.

“It gives them a three-month picture of how well they’ve controlled their blood sugar,” she said.

“We have a three-month followup meeting in November. They will have a chance for another A1C test. They will see how well they’ve managed since their education.”