

November is Diabetes Awareness month, a time when The Canadian Diabetes Association and partners focus on increasing the awareness of diabetes, helping those living with diabetes feel supported and educating those at risk of diabetes.

Registered Dietitian with the Diabetes Education Program at Bridges Community Health Centre, Christina Dupont, is one of those partners helping to educate and support people who are living with or may be at risk of developing diabetes.

“I have a touch of sugar”, “my sugar was a little high” and “I have borderline diabetes”. These are sentences I hear casually mentioned in my practice almost daily. Most times my clients are referring to pre-diabetes, a condition where blood glucose (sugar) levels are higher than normal, but not yet within the diabetes range.

A pattern I’ve noticed is that individuals do not know what pre-diabetes is and don’t think they need to make any changes. And this is heightened by the fact that individuals with pre-diabetes generally don’t feel unwell. “I feel fine,” they tell me. But is this a condition to be shrugged off, or should individuals be concerned?

Well, the pre-diabetes diagnosis is a bit of an internal warning suggesting some lifestyle changes should be made to delay the onset of diabetes. Research has shown that some of the long term complications that occur in someone living with diabetes, such as heart disease, may begin early during the pre-diabetes stage. Early vascular damage may be occurring and may be preventable with a few simple changes to their eating habits and level of activity.

At Bridges Community Health Centre, the Diabetes Education Program offers an engaging workshop called Keeping Diabetes Away. The 2.5 hour session focuses on information about pre-diabetes and realistic changes individuals can make. The session has a large focus on healthy eating strategies that are practical and assist in managing optimal blood glucose levels. Food models, dinnerware, food labels, measuring cups and recipes are used to engage the participants in how to apply the information at home. Other topics include: heart health, food label reading, physical activity, and importance of sleep.

The workshop is free and offered regularly. It is open to all individuals with pre-diabetes, family members, caregivers, those with a strong family history of diabetes, or anyone interested in learning more about prevention. Please call ahead for more information or to register by visiting [www.bridgechc.ca](http://www.bridgechc.ca)

Author Bio: Christina Dupont is a Registered Dietitian with the Diabetes Education Program at Bridges Community Health Centre. Bridges CHC serves the communities of Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Wainfleet. For more information on Bridges CHC, visit: <https://www.bridgeschc.ca/>