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**YOU *THINK* YOU DON'T HAVE DIABETES. YOU COULD BE WRONG.
Westchester County Health Department launches diabetes awareness blitz**

Diabetes is not always easy to spot. Although an estimated 21 million Americans have been diagnosed with the disease, the American Diabetes Association believes that another six million have diabetes and don't even know it. Unless treated, diabetes can progressively cause irreparable damage, leading to heart disease, stroke, amputations, blindness and death. This is why the Westchester County Health Department is spreading the word about diabetes screening on Diabetes Alert Day, March 27.

"Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in Westchester, but many of those deaths could be prevented with treatment," said Westchester County Health Commissioner, Dr. Joshua Lipsman. "On Diabetes Alert Day, we will have people out at sites throughout the County encouraging residents to take a simple test that will assess their risk of developing diabetes. Over 1,000 copies of an American Diabetes Association brochure describing the test will be distributed to the public through this informational campaign."

The brochure, titled *Could You Be at Risk for Diabetes? Take the Test. Know Your Score*, is available in English and Spanish. Copies will be handed out through an array of organizations, including the Westchester County Health Department's clinics and community outreach programs. To ensure that the greatest number of County residents receive this important information, brochures will also be distributed through the Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center network and Peekskill's Hudson River HealthCare, and several community-based organizations including: the Child Care Council; the Westchester Hispanic Coalition; WestCOP / Dole Center in Mount Vernon; Planned Parenthood in White Plains and New Rochelle; and Union Baptist Church in Greenburgh.

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In people with diabetes, the body does not produce or properly use insulin - a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy. This causes blood glucose (sugar) to be too high, leading to severe health problems.

The cause of diabetes is uncertain but genetics appear to play a role and risk increases with age. However, many other preventable factors contribute to increased risk. These include:

- Having diabetes during pregnancy or having a baby weighing more than nine pounds at birth.
- Having high blood pressure (at or above 130/80)
- Being overweight or obese
- Being physically inactive
- Eating a poor diet high in sugars and starches, low in fiber
- Being African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander
- Having a family history of the disease

Although there may be warning signs that you have diabetes, such as frequent urination, excessive thirst, and unexplained weight loss, diabetes also may be a silent disease that you can have for years without being aware that you have it. The Westchester County Health Department urges residents NOT to wait for symptoms to appear. Taking the Risk Test is an easy way to find out if you are at risk for diabetes and in need of further screening. Those who feel they may be at risk for diabetes should speak with their doctors about screening options.

The American Diabetes Alert Day is an annual, one-day call-to-action held on the fourth Tuesday of March to encourage all Americans to assess their risk for diabetes.

For more information, please call the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000 or visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health