

November 2023

**SPECIAL EDITION:
DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH**

PREVENTION
LINK
of Southern Maryland

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Unlocking the Path to Better Health: Addressing Diabetes and Weight Management

Addressing diabetes is an urgent issue in our community. To effectively combat this disease, two main areas must be focused on: weight reduction and addressing social determinants of health. However, there are additional factors to consider. The diabetes care team plays a critical role in addressing social determinants of health, such as economic stability, healthcare quality, social and community factors, neighborhood and environmental conditions, and access to education. Additionally, preventing and managing cardiovascular conditions is important in mitigating the impact of diabetes.

Furthermore, we must implement more aggressive strategies to fight against cardiovascular disease, which includes setting lower goals for blood pressure and LDL cholesterol levels. By taking action, we have the power to make a significant impact in this battle.

Discover the Power of Weight Management and Lifestyle Changes to Confront Diabetes

Understanding the significance of weight management is vital for patients. With that in mind, we emphasize the importance of setting more intensive weight loss goals, up to 15%, based on the proven effectiveness of newer medications. We must ensure that our patients have access to these life-changing treatments.

Navigating the Road to Success: Pharmacologic Therapy

When lifestyle changes fail to help patients reach their goals, pharmacologic therapy can be a valuable tool in the arsenal to consider. It is crucial to select the right approach, and several studies suggest the use of [glucagon-like peptide-1 \(GLP-1\) agonists](#) and the dual GLP-1/glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide receptor agonist tirzepatide as effective options.



Weight Management in Diabetes and the Importance of Lifestyle Changes

As November is Diabetes Awareness Month, it's crucial to emphasize the importance of weight management and lifestyle changes in diabetes care. Recent studies have shown that newer medications can help achieve more intensive weight loss goals (up to 15%). However, it's important to note that medication should only be used with healthy eating, physical activity, and behavior modification. Drug therapy is recommended for those with a BMI ≥ 30 kg/m² or a BMI 27–29.9 kg/m² with weight-related comorbidities who haven't met weight-loss goals with comprehensive lifestyle interventions alone for patients looking to lose weight and improve their health outcomes.

Who Are the Ideal Candidates for Drug Therapy?

According to the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#), candidates with a body mass index (BMI) of 27 kg/m² or higher, or a BMI of 27 to 29.9 kg/m² with weight-related comorbidities are good candidates for drug therapies such as [Wegovy](#). Before taking this approach, however, patients should have attempted comprehensive lifestyle interventions and fallen short of achieving their weight-loss goals, defined as losing at least 5% of total body weight within three to six months.

Harnessing the Power of Change: Combining Lifestyle Modifications with Pharmacologic Therapy

While drug therapy presents a remarkable opportunity, it should never be used in isolation. Lifestyle changes are an integral part of any weight loss plan. This is where PreventionLink's diabetes prevention and self-management programs come in. With our programs, patients can achieve remarkable results.

Discover True Stories of Transformation

Don't just take our word for it. One of our participants has shared a testimonial highlighting the life-changing impact of our programs. Take a moment to read her inspiring story below.

Join us in the fight against diabetes and obesity. Together, we can unlock a healthier future.

Read the transcript on page 4 of an interview with one of our participants.

Valerie's Life-Changing Journey with PreventionLink



Transcript from PreventionLink's Podcast

Princess: Good morning, Valerie. Thank you for joining us today. Can you tell us about your experience with PreventionLink's Diabetes Prevention Program?

Valerie: Thank you for having me. The Diabetes Prevention Program offered by PreventionLink has been a life-changing experience for me. When I was diagnosed with prediabetes, I was devastated.

I remember saying to myself, "I will not get diabetes!" That statement became my motivation to begin my journey to prevent this chronic disease, and through this program, I was able to take control of my health and prevent diabetes.

Princess: That's wonderful to hear. Could you share more about what the program entailed?

Valerie: The program was a year-long journey that focused on making small lifestyle changes that can add up to big health benefits. We had weekly sessions that were led by a trained lifestyle coach who helped us achieve our goals. We learned about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity in preventing diabetes, and we implemented strategies to overcome barriers to healthy living. I learned that making small changes in my food choices and doing at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week would add up to big, good health results.

Princess: What specific changes did you make to your lifestyle through the program?

Valerie: I made a lot of changes to my lifestyle because of the program. I stopped drinking soda, measured my food portions, stopped eating between meals, planned my meals, read food labels, cut sugar, and started exercising regularly. I also adopted a more positive attitude toward self-love and stress management. These changes helped me lose over 100 pounds, and my blood sugar levels are now in the normal range.

Princess: Wow, congratulations on losing 100 pounds! Your results are truly incredible! Were there any obstacles you faced along the way, and how did you overcome them?

Valerie: The biggest challenge for me was giving up sugary foods and drinks. However, I received tremendous support from the program, which helped me stay committed to my new exercise routine. I also had to overcome negative body image self-talk, and the program helped me adopt a more positive attitude toward myself. By committing to meal planning, I was able to overcome my tendency to go back for seconds.

Princess: How did the program help you transition to long-term healthy habits?

Valerie: The program provided us with quick and easy recipes, tools to hold ourselves accountable for our health, and a network of supportive peers who became friends. The program's format provided sustainable information, which allowed me to continue my good health journey long after the class ended.

Princess: What advice would you give to those who are considering enrolling in the program or making lifestyle changes on their own?

Valerie: I would advise anyone considering enrolling in the program to stay true to themselves and to make small changes in their food and physical activity over time, consistently. Joining the Prevent Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Program provides the guidance you need to help you reach your goals. Making healthy choices in your everyday life is the most important thing you will ever do for yourself and your body. Do something GREAT for yourself! You deserve it. Joining the program works!





Dr. Levy's Corner:

Welcome to the Health Department

A New Leader.

**An Exciting Time:
Dr. Matthew Levy**

Introducing Dr. Matthew Levy, A Beacon of Health and Change

Join us in extending a warm welcome to Dr. Matthew Levy, our newly appointed public health officer at the Prince George's County Health Department. With an impressive background encompassing over 20 years of experience as a skilled physician, instructor, and administrator, Dr. Levy is poised to make a profound positive impact on our community.

Dr. Levy's journey is marked by exceptional achievements and a commitment to excellence. His extensive resume includes prestigious appointments, such as the Community Pediatrics and Child Advocacy Fellow at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Policy Fellow at the Institute of Medicine/National Academies of Science. Notably, he served as a Health Policy Advisor to North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad, contributing to critical healthcare decision-making.

Beyond his clinical expertise, Dr. Levy has devoted more than two decades to teaching, holding faculty positions at esteemed institutions like Georgetown University School of Medicine and Emory School of Medicine. His dedication to shaping the future of healthcare extends to advisory roles on key initiatives, such as the Bipartisan Policy Center's Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative.

Dr. Levy's unparalleled knowledge spans health policy, population health, quality improvement science, and medical education, making him an invaluable asset as we work toward improving health outcomes for underserved communities and families with limited resources.

Throughout his illustrious career, Dr. Levy has consistently advocated for innovative solutions to bridge the gap in healthcare accessibility for underprivileged communities. By fostering a positive and supportive work environment founded on trust and empowerment, he resonates with the vision that, together, we can achieve remarkable success.

His efforts have not gone unnoticed. Dr. Levy has been honored with numerous awards and accolades, including the Special Achievement Award for Distinguished Service from the D.C. chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). He currently serves as a Fellow with the AAP and contributes as a member of the Wisconsin Chapter of the AAP.

Academically accomplished, Dr. Levy holds degrees from several esteemed institutions, including a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Michigan, a Master of Public Health from Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health, and a Doctor of Medicine from New York Medical College.

Dr. Levy has set his sights on breaking down barriers in various aspects of health, recognizing that physical, mental, behavioral, oral, nutritional, environmental, and social determinants of health are interconnected. By strengthening our county leadership, fostering collaboration and partnerships, and ensuring improved healthcare access for those in need, he intends to drive transformative change.

With a mandate that encompasses the development of a new strategic plan and aspirations to become a Public Health Accreditation Board-accredited health department, Dr. Levy envisions a diverse team of 600 members whose actions are rooted in respect and positive intent. His ultimate goal is to empower each team member to bring their unique energy, creativity, and unwavering commitment to serving the communities of Prince George's County.

Though the path to achieving these goals may be long and demanding, Dr. Levy stands resolute in his commitment to effect positive change. He firmly believes that trust and genuine care for one another form the bedrock of highly successful organizations. Under his transformative leadership, we are confident that the Prince George's County Health Department will elevate itself to the forefront of county public health.

In conclusion, we are thrilled to welcome Dr. Matthew Levy to our department and do so with open arms. We eagerly anticipate the positive changes he will usher in alongside his dedicated team. Together, we will realize our shared mission of providing enhanced healthcare access for underserved communities in Prince George's County. Dr. Levy's expertise, passion, and unwavering dedication will undoubtedly, make an impact on our community's health and well-being. Let's embark on this inspiring journey together.



PreventionLink at the Maryland Rural Health Conference

PreventionLink recently had the opportunity to present at the Maryland Rural Health Conference in Ocean City, Maryland. The conference focused on achieving rural health equity, an important issue that needs attention in Prince George’s County and Southern Maryland.

During the presentation entitled “How Diabetes Prevention Programs Can Impact Rural Communities,” experts Twarnisha Stokes, Caitlin Murphy, and Amber Allen overviewed data for obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cholesterol in Southern Maryland, and discussed various strategies for empowering rural counties and improving diabetes prevention by detailing PreventionLink program activities. They emphasized the importance of increasing enrollment in prevention programs, implementing effective care coordination and workflows, and using technology for data collection and accessible telehealth.

Throughout the conference, we were able to listen to other presentations from all over the state of Maryland and learn about the unique problems facing Marylanders out west and on the eastern shore.

By sharing best practices and innovative approaches, PreventionLink hopes to inspire positive change and contribute to improving rural health equity. Together, we can make a difference in the prevention and management of chronic diseases in rural communities.





Continuation Grant Secured: PreventionLink Project Receives \$5 Million Funding to Combat Diabetes, Hypertension, and Stroke.

We are thrilled to announce that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has awarded our PreventionLink Project a continuation grant. This generous 5-year cooperative agreement, totaling \$5 million, is a testament to our commitment to reducing the devastating effects of diabetes, hypertension, and stroke.

Through the project, we will prioritize linking residents to crucial preventive services, ensuring that lives are saved and communities are strengthened. With this grant, we can make a lasting impact on the health and well-being of countless individuals.

An Incredible Milestone: Prince George's County is the First in Maryland to Receive National Recognition as an Umbrella Hub Organization!

The Prince George's County Health Department has been awarded the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) Umbrella Hub Arrangement (UHA) with "full plus" recognition, making it the first in Maryland to receive such accolades. The UHA connects community-based organizations with healthcare payment systems to deliver the National DPP lifestyle change program aimed at preventing diabetes among prediabetic individuals. Partnering with seven subsidiary organizations, the UHA provides multiple benefits to improve diabetes prevention and management in the county, including support from lifestyle coaches, community-specific services, cost savings, and bi-directional referrals. This recognition by the CDC for its quality assurance program ensures the highest standards in the delivery of the National DPP lifestyle change program. The Prince George's County Health Department continues to lead the fight against diabetes and is committed to advancing the community's well-being.

UPCOMING EVENTS



“WELLNESS, IT’S HAPPENING HERE”

Bowie BOLD Wellness Day

November 17, 2023

11:00 am–3:00 pm

Bowie State University Student Center
14000 Jericho Park Road
Bowie, MD 20715



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