For the millions of people facing either prediabetes or diabetes, choices can seem limited and patients often struggle to make the lifestyle changes that could lead to a healthier future. Perham Health is committed to helping diabetic patients face these challenges by providing diabetes education, support, and care.

It is estimated that approximately 79 million American adults have prediabetes. These individuals are likely to develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years, unless action is taken to prevent or delay the disease. Perham Health’s Diabetes Prevention Program seeks to reduce participants’ risk of developing type 2 diabetes by providing them with tools for healthy living.

“I first heard about this type of a program when my sister-in-law told me about it,” explains program participant Diane Klinnert. “My sister-in-law belonged to a program like this in southern Minnesota. When it was offered at Perham Health, my husband Paul and I decided to sign up.”

The Klinnerts are a part of Perham Health’s first Diabetes Prevention Program group. The outstanding success achieved by the group’s participants has resulted in the recent formation of a second group. Colleen Bauck, Regional RN Health Coach, and Gwen Horter, licensed registered dietician, facilitate the local program along with Sarah Boyer, RN, BSN, diabetes educator, and Delsi Snortum, LPN. The groups meet weekly for the first four months and then continue to meet once a month for the duration of the year-long program.

“I really enjoy the small group setting,” Klinnert says. “The program helps you get a handle on eating more sensibly. We were asked to start journaling about what we eat and that really helps you be accountable for what you’re putting in your mouth. As you get older, your metabolism isn’t what it used to be...”

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to be. The program helped Paul and I become more aware of our food choices. Preventing diabetes is so much better than dealing with it after you already have it.”

Perham Health Clinic’s Diabetes Prevention Program is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-led National Diabetes Prevention Program and is nationally supported by the Diabetes Prevention and Control Alliance. In addition to encouraging participants to eat healthier, the program also focuses on how lifestyle changes such as increasing physical activity and losing even a modest amount of weight can prevent or delay development of type 2 diabetes in those at high risk for the disease.

“There are things that increase a person’s chance of developing type 2 diabetes that cannot be controlled, age and genetics for example,” mentions Gwen Horter, one of the trained lifestyle coaches who facilitates the program. “On the other hand, a person can lose weight and become more active in an effort to prevent it. While people may set their own individual goals, the program’s goal is to help participants lose seven percent of their body weight through healthy eating and encourage 150 minutes of brisk physical activity each week.”

For those who have already been diagnosed with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes, Perham Health also offers diabetes education. As a registered nurse and diabetes educator, Sarah Boyer provides diabetes education through individual counseling to help patients self-manage their diabetes.

After realizing his type 2 diabetes was starting to get out of control, Ottertail resident Rick Heaton met with Sarah Boyer for assistance with managing his diabetes. “When I started having more problems last winter I knew I needed to get an appointment with a diabetic educator so we could work on a lot of things,” Heaton acknowledges.

He first learned about the possibility of working with a diabetic educator at a Perham Health Clinic visit with his primary care physician Dr. Mark Paulson. “Dr. Paulson has been my physician for 24 years,” Heaton explains. “He has helped keep me accountable through all of this. He recommended that I see both a diabetic educator and a dietician to help me monitor my blood sugars and make adjustments on a regular basis.”

“My experience working with Rick was very positive,” Boyer says. “He is motivated to take charge of his diabetes and is very aware of what he needs to do to keep his diabetes well controlled. Our visit was very productive because he already identified the changes he wanted to make and we simply spent time problem solving ways to achieve this. For example, due to an infection affecting an extremity that prevented walking, he noted higher blood sugars. We discussed other exercises he is able to do while seated, such as shadow boxing, so that he is still able to do exercise that increases his heart rate.”

After meeting with Boyer this April, Heaton has since followed up with her via telephone. He has another office visit scheduled with Boyer two months from now. “I feel so thankful that Sarah is only a phone call away if something goofy starts happening,” Heaton says. “She is accessible, very intelligent, and an excellent communicator. She really helped me get back on track.”

“I work closely with the patient’s primary care providers; the assessments I make that are ‘out of the normal range’ are sent to the providers so they can evaluate if the patient’s blood sugars can be improved with treatment such as medication, medical weight management, or even seeing a counselor for stress reduction,” Boyer says. “The dietitian and I work very closely together and work to see each other’s urgent patients as soon as possible. The health coach also identifies patients who can benefit from diabetes education, and we work closely to ensure continuity of care for the patient’s overall health.”

“Once I started controlling my eating habits and slightly increasing my insulin things started to fall in place. Now I take two kinds of insulins and, for the most part, my readings are in the target range. Prior to going to Sarah probably only 10 percent of them were in the target range,” Heaton reports.

He continues, “She did a great job encouraging me not to make quick decisions about changing my insulin. She also helped me understand the test results better.”

Pat Heaton chimes in, “Lack of knowledge causes fear. Once you get the knowledge you feel more comfortable doing it on your own.”

In addition to diabetic education and the Diabetes Prevention Program, Perham Health offers individual counseling for type 1 diabetes patients, nutrition education and gestational diabetes.

“Perham Health’s team really works well together to make things less confusing,” says Heaton. “They are all on the same page. I would absolutely recommend that anyone with diabetes use the services they offer. The way I see it, I’m in a competitive game right now and that is how I treat diabetes. I am going to win.”
Telehealth services provide direct access to specialists

Seconds are critical when a patient is having a stroke. Perham Health’s new telestroke technology allows emergency department doctors to diagnose and treat stroke symptoms as quickly as possible.

Telestroke is a service that connects local doctors with a Sanford neurologist. When a patient with a suspected acute stroke is admitted to the emergency department, a neurologist is notified and an emergency video consultation is requested. The neurologist can then offer support in deciding on the best treatment options for the patient.

Having this technology available in Perham means that stroke patients can receive immediate access to a neurosurgeon, even though patients are 70 miles away from the closest neurologist. “Telestroke provides quick and easy access to specialty consultation so that we can provide the very best care to our patients with symptoms of a stroke,” explains Sonda Tolle, VP of Patient Services at Perham Health. “Early intervention results in more successful outcomes for patients.”

The doctor attending to the patient will have the final say on decisions regarding patient care including patient transport, tests and procedures performed, and medications given. “Telestroke provides another set of eyes to concur with our assessment, exam, and treatment plan,” says Dr. Tim Studer, an emergency department physician at Perham Health.

“This technology allows the treating neurologist or neurosurgeon to see the patient and assist in making treatment decisions directly with me at the patient’s bedside,” Dr. Studer continues. “This saves time that would traditionally take me away from the patient to have to make a telephone call to describe the patient’s problem over the phone. Ultimately, it gets our patients much needed treatment in a timelier fashion.”

The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A neurologist can be reached for a video consultation within five minutes. Patients can then speak directly with the neurologist, resulting in a rapid evaluation. Telestroke is also used to facilitate a patient’s smooth transfer to Sanford Health in Fargo for specialty care either by ground or air.

“Our patients and families who have experienced telestroke video technology have fully supported its use in their care and have been very receptive to the technology,” Tolle mentions.

Perham Health first started using telestroke in July of 2015. Since then, the hospital has rolled out two additional telehealth services. Teleburn offers specialty consultation for a patient who has received a burn. This technology provides access to a regional burn center in St. Paul, Minnesota, to determine the best treatment plan for the patient.

Teleneonatology (teleneo) is the most recent addition to the telehealth service line at Perham Health. “Teleneo gives the OB provider access to a neonatologist who is an expert in the care of newborns,” Tolle says. “If we have a sick newborn, the OB provider has the ability to consult with a neonatologist within five minutes using this technology.”

In the near future, Perham Health will also serve as a pilot site for teleEMS. EMS staff will use an iPad to connect to the Perham Health emergency department provider. This will give the provider the ability to assess and develop a treatment plan at the scene or en route in the ambulance and prepare for the patient’s arrival to the emergency department.

“Telehealth services are a true benefit to the patients we serve in our community by providing access to specialty care in a rural health care facility,” Tolle adds. “These services also support patients and their families by keeping patients local when possible and providing them with excellent care.”

Life time of care

Congratulations and thank you, Dr. Corey Nyhus

For years, families and patients have trusted their care to Dr. Nyhus. After 37 years of commitment to care and community, Dr. Nyhus retired June 30 from Perham Health.

The Perham Health family wishes you the best in your retirement!
Perham Health Scholarship Recipients

Perham Health is pleased to announce the recipients of its Health Care Careers Educational Scholarship. Six area students pursuing careers in the health field were each awarded a $1000 scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to high school seniors or post-secondary students residing in the Perham Health service area. Congratulations to this year’s recipients.

Jeanne Brandvold  
MState Detroit Lakes

Jeanne attends MState Detroit Lakes in the registered nurse program.

Sydney Karels  
Perham High School

Sydney will attend the University of Minnesota-Duluth as a biology major and further pursue a Physician’s Assistant degree. Her parents are Nick and Kristi Karels.

Jordan Martinson  
Perham High School

Jordan will pursue a degree in kinesiology then physical therapy and is undecided as to what institution she will attend. Her parents are Brian and Jody Martinson.

Brooke Rehm  
Henning High School

Brooke is enrolled at the University of North Dakota in the physical therapy program. Her parents are Ronnie and Stacey Rehm.

Amy Scheidecker  
Perham High School

Amy will pursue a pharmacy major at North Dakota State University. Her parents are Dean and Ann Scheidecker.

Ashley Zitzow  
Perham High School

Ashley will study genetics at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Her parents are Kent and Ann Zitzow.

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