Diabetes—unfortunately, it's a primary diagnosis for all of us, whether you are African American, a woman who has the disease or you're a person who has the disease for a relative. With more than 28 million Americans diagnosed with diabetes, the disease is peculiarly pervasive. There are neighborhoods of people who are prediabetic or at high-risk for developing the "diabetes," diabetes has become a way of life in some regions. Diabetes is of particular importance in our region. The rate of increase in diabetes between 2000 and 2001 is expected to occur at an unprecedented rate. The study of the estimated risk for those individuals born in 2000 is roughly one in three. And, the health rate from diabetes among African Americans living in Allegheny County is tied to the rate in Whites (see figure 1).

In this article, we are talking about the diabetes and not type 1 diabetes. Caused basically by genetics, type 1 diabetes is where the body's immune system destroys the pancreatic cells that make insulin. Type 1 diabetes is relatively rare but it can occur in any age group.

Let's start with a brief description of type 2 diabetes. It is a disease characterized by failure of the body's pancreas to secrete enough insulin, or by the body's inability to use the insulin the pancreas does produce. The result of a combination of lifestyle and genetic influences is an accumulation of glucose in the blood that lowers the level of glucose. A type (a form of super in the blood) also helps glucose enter the body's cells to be stored for energy or other uses. The more sugar in the bloodstream, the more damage the body, which can cause serious health problems, such as heart disease, blindness, eye problems, dental problems, complications in pregnancy, and even limb amputations. Type 2 diabetes accounts for 95-98 percent of diabetes cases in the United States.

Diabetes sounds scary, but it is not a death sentence and you can control it. Type 2 diabetes is characterized by the inability to make the appropriate lifestyle interventions.

Why make lifestyle changes to avoid type 2 diabetes? There are key to avoiding type 2 diabetes. It is to control your blood sugar level, which can be done by watching what you eat, exercising, and losing any excess weight. For many people, those things are difficult. Many of us work a lot, put the needs of children or older parents ahead of our own and lack the time or resources to join a gym or pay for a personal exercise program.

Even with those barriers to eating healthily and exercising regularly, regular exercise can prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes. This and other disease prevention activities for those who live with diabetes at the University of Pittsburgh's Diabetes Education Program at participating churches and community sites. Read more about the American Society for Human Genetics, type 1 diabetes, and type 2 diabetes. Caused mainly by genetics, type 1 diabetes is where the body's immune system destroys the pancreatic cells that make insulin.

The problem is that diabetes, type 2 diabetes, and preven tions are talking about diabetes management and other health-related topics. The first step is just a starting point.

The UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE launched a new guide to healthful eating this year, and the guide and other helpful information can be found at http://www.choosemyplate.gov.

The YINCA OF GREATER PITTSBURGH offers health and wellness programs and online resources. Many locations also have Child Watch, a supervised program that provides children with a variety of activities while you exercise.

The HEALTH AND WELNESS CENTER AT HOSPITAL launches a new guide to healthful eating this year, and the guide and other helpful information can be found at http://www.choosemyplate.gov.

The CARNegie LIBRARY OF PITTSBURGH has 20 locations throughout the city. Use the Library to help you with your search for information about diabetes, its prevention and health or wellness programs. The following list is just a starting point.

The ALLEGHeny COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT has a wealth of resources available for diabetes information. Visit www.achd.net, and under "Divisions" click on "Human Health," then on "Chronic Disease." You will find many resources online and in print for managing diabetes. For more information, please visit "Community Partners" at http://www.achd.net/ctsi.

The American Diabetes Expo is FREE and includes health screenings, cooking demos, and weight loss resources. Visit the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org to pre-register and receive more information.

The American Diabetes Association Expo and Pittsburgh will be held on November 5, 2010. Learn how to live healthy, be active and change the future for you and your family.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Diabetes Prevention Program. For more information, please contact Community Partners at http://www.achd.net/ctsi.