

TAUNTON DAILY GAZETTE

Health Resource Fair to offer diabetes info, raise awareness

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Fall River — For diabetics in the know, the World Diabetes Day Health Resource Fair on Nov. 14, will be a time for socializing and perhaps discovering a new resource or tidbit of information.

For people who are newly diagnosed with diabetes, the day will offer a wealth of resources for battling the disease.

The Diabetes Association of People Inc., in partnership with Fellowship Health Resources, will offer the second annual fair on Thursday, Nov. 14, at People Inc., 4 S. Main St., 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Diabetes Association hopes to raise awareness about the effects of Type 1 and Type II diabetes.

The prevalence of diabetes in this area is higher than the state average.

In Fall River, 10 percent of the population has diabetes as opposed to 7.5 percent in the state, according to a Massachusetts Department of Public Health report from 2010.

The statistics also revealed that the prevalence of diabetes increases with age, locally, from 4.1 percent in the 25 to 44 age range, to 13.2 percent in the 45 to 64 age range, and up to 22.1 percent in people age 65 and older. Statewide statistics showed lower numbers in all three age ranges.

Risk factors for being diagnosed with diabetes are also higher in Fall River, including having high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, being overweight and obese, and smoking.

Some 30.5 percent of males and 25.8 percent of females in Fall River were classified as obese, as opposed to 23.8 and 19.6 percent statewide, respectively.

Smoking rates in Fall River were high as well with 24.4 percent of men and 21.5 percent of women classified as current smokers in 2010. Statewide, 16.8 percent of men and 14.9 percent of women smoked.

The World Diabetes Day Health Resource Fair hopes to bring together vendors, resources, and educational elements to educate about diabetes.

John Quintas, who runs programs for adults at the Diabetes Association, started the fair last year for just these reasons.

"It's bigger and better than last year," said Quintas.

The day will offer blood pressure and body mass index screenings, information about medication and glucose testing, a smoothie sample table, healthy foods, and vendors from the HealthFirst dental care program, Medtronic, and more.

Katje Fuson, Diabetes Association director of Community, Child, and Family Services, said the fair is ideal for people newly diagnosed with diabetes because they are generally left to figure out the disease on their own.

"This goes beyond taking medication and what you should eat," Fuson said.

Quintas said veteran diabetics will also find a lot of information at the fair they can use.

"It provides them with information they might not have had before," Quintas said. "They can interact with other people."

Quintas will offer free weekly adult diabetes classes starting Wednesday, Jan. 8, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the Diabetes Association. Attendees will learn about proper nutrition for diabetics, how to properly take their medication, how to care for themselves, and more. No registration is required.