

# MEDIA RELEASE

13 NOVEMBER 2009



## Preventing Type 2 Diabetes: Helping Tasmanians to make healthy lifestyle changes

On World Diabetes Day (tomorrow Saturday, November 14), General Practice Tasmania is urging the Tasmanian community to become more aware of the risks of developing type 2 diabetes and of how to make changes to help prevent the condition. Type 2 Diabetes is a leading cause of vascular disease, visual impairment and blindness, kidney failure, foot ulcers, and amputation.

General Practice Tasmania spokesperson, Dr Judith Watson, said it was estimated up to 60 per cent of type 2 diabetes was preventable through healthy lifestyle changes and there are programs available in Tasmania to help people in making these changes.

"Making healthy lifestyle changes, such as maintaining a healthy weight, regular physical activity, making healthy food choices, managing blood pressure and cholesterol levels and not smoking can all delay and even prevent, the onset of type 2 diabetes," Dr Watson said. "With increasing rates of obesity and sedentary lifestyles across the country it is essential we encourage Tasmanian's who may be at risk of developing the disease to do something about it, and to offer them help to do so."

The national Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Program offers patients in the 40-49 year age group, who are assessed and referred by their GP, the opportunity to attend an accredited, subsidised lifestyle program.

These are group education programs, run by accredited facilitators, which help participants to make healthy lifestyle changes related to physical activity, weight loss and nutrition.

Eligible participants will pay a maximum of \$50 for the entire program, and this cost will be waived for health care card or commonwealth concession card holders.

"There are now nationally accredited programs in each region of Tasmania, with program providers taking referrals from GPs," Dr Watson said.

"Individuals concerned about their level of risk should talk to their GP about having their risk assessed and potentially being referred to take part in one of these nationally accredited lifestyle programs" Dr Watson said.

"Lifestyle change programs have already been put in place in countries such as the United States, Japan and Finland and there is a strong body of evidence to show that they are effective," Dr Watson said.

"Type 2 diabetes is commonly related to lifestyle factors and we know it can be prevented. Your local general practice is a great place to seek advice about diet, exercise and other risk factors no matter what your age."

For information about healthy lifestyle programs running in your area, phone your local Division of General Practice:

General Practice North (03) 63 319296

General Practice North West (03) 64 321440

General Practice South (03) 62 087300

*The General Practice Tasmania network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.*

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