

Controlling prediabetes



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Sheridan Memorial Hospital Administrative Assistant Buffy Shatek, left, has Clinical Dietitian Sarah Houghton review her dietary diary Friday afternoon at Sheridan Home Health.

• SMH program helps participants improve diet, exercise

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In an effort to lower the percentage of people with prediabetes in the state, the Wyoming Department of Health is sponsoring a pilot Diabetes Prevention and Control program at Sheridan Memorial Hospital.

Administered by four instructors from the Diabetes Education branch of Memorial Hospital, the twelve-week study began Feb. 2 and is composed of 17 volunteer hospital employees.

Every step of the program is immediately recorded and sent in data form to the DOH; if the study is successful after the first twelve weeks and subsequent four- to six-month check-ins, the program may be made available to the public.

Nearly 13 percent of Wyoming adults report having diabetes or prediabetes, according to The Associated Press. Prediabetes is a condition in which individuals have blood-glucose levels not high enough to be classified as diabetes but high enough to increase their risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, states the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“The program walks people through a behav-

ioral change,” explained Patty Bell-Lewis, a Registered Dietitian who directs the Diabetes Education branch and one of the program instructors. “We focus on teaching participants to eat healthy foods and get enough exercise.”

The four instructors meet weekly with the participants in a group setting to discuss what unconscious habits can be changed to lead a healthier life. Alyssa Wright, Sarah Houghton, and Christina Lipetzky are the other instructors.

According to Bell-Lewis, group interaction is a key program component.

“Research shows that when people know they are not alone in their struggles, they do better,” she stated. “It’s not the same if we just meet one-on-one: It’s not the same level of support or nourishment that they need. It’s a huge advantage to be cheering each other on.”

Bell-Lewis described a “four-week slump” that the instructors faced at the beginning of March. Participants weren’t seeing the immediate results they expected and were tired of forcing themselves to exercise and lay off the fat grams.

“We saw a lot of grumpy faces that week,” said Bell-Lewis. “We knew we had to keep going, so [the instructors] sent daily e-mails dur-

ing the following week ... encouraging the participants and reminding them why the end results will be so worth it.”

The instructors continue to meet participants individually to help them reach a personal goal at the end of the week.

As of this week, the participants are on schedule with the program.

After six weeks of hard work and adjustment, the participants’ mean weight loss for those who recorded their food daily was 5.6 pounds; those who didn’t record their diet lost 3.9 pounds.

Participants who recorded their exercise lost on average 7.7 pounds, while those who did not record their physical activity lost 3.5 pounds.

This direct feedback allows the participants and instructors to make adjustments to the program according to successes and failures encountered along the way.

“We’re pretty excited,” said Bell-Lewis. “We have quite a spectrum [of participants] in terms of physical health, but everyone seems to be improving.”

“It’s key to instruct them how to curb their impulsive behavior and stick to something difficult.”