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*A little exercise goes a long way*

# **Small lifestyle changes have big impacts for diabetics**

Diabetes is in the news in Indian country, and I believe that our tribes and tribal members are aware of the devastating effects of diabetes and that we can turn this around if we choose to. I have not shared with you recently concerning diabetes, my favorite topic. My recent attendance at a meeting with Indian Health Service (IHS) and Oklahoma health care providers prompted me once again to talk about diabetes prevention and the prevention of the devastating complications of diabetes.

This summer would be a wonderful time to take control of a part of your life by increasing your activity and making healthier food choices. We are finding out those small changes in your life cause big results. Just adding 1,000 additional steps in daily walking can reduce your risk factors for developing diabetes. There are fears that our generation will be one of the first in which children will have shorter life spans than did their parents. This can be prevented.

The conference sponsored by IHS focused on the treatment that is being given in our Oklahoma IHS, tribal and urban facilities. We listened to programs on weight reduction, increased activity, nutrition programs for children, and many other topics. Topics such as “Metabolic Syndrome” and cardio vascular disease were discussed. One assessment tool I particularly liked is called “abdominal circumference.” Our Oklahoma IHS Diabetic Consultant agreed that abdominal circumference was an excellent assessment tool. The waist measurement for a woman should be no greater than 36 inches, and a man should be no greater than 40 inches. Since many patients do not like to be measured, she has little ropes that she hands out to patients to measure their own waist. We were all given either a pink or blue rope. I encourage you to be brave and measure your own waist. If you are larger than you should be, come in to see the nutritionist and exercise physiologist and do something about it. We have to take the future of our own health in our hands and feet: “move it” is the motto.

I would be more than happy to answer questions that you may have about diabetes. As the Oklahoma representative for the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee, I can better represent you when I hear from you. You can e-mail me at [jparker@mailclerk.ecok.edu](mailto:jparker@mailclerk.ecok.edu). Please label the e-mail with something related to diabetes so I will recognize your e-mail. I look forward to hearing from you. Since I am trying to practice what I preach, I am on my way to the tribal exercise facility. Hope to see you there!

Have a safe and happy summer.

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