

Lifestyle changes effective in protecting against Type II diabetes

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Changing to a healthier lifestyle appears to be at least as effective as taking prescription drugs in reducing the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, says a new BMJ study.

Type 2 diabetes is a growing problem – in England around 1.3 million people have diabetes and around 5% of total NHS resources are used for the care of people with diabetes.

Researchers from Leicester reviewed studies which measured the effects of different interventions – lifestyle, diabetes drug and anti-obesity drug – on people with impaired glucose tolerance (1).

They found that lifestyle changes, e.g. switching to a healthier diet and increasing exercise to be at least as effective as taking prescription drugs. On average, lifestyle changes helped to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by around half. Lifestyle changes were also less likely to have adverse side-effects.

However, the researchers say that both lifestyle changes and prescription drug taking must be sustained in order to prevent the development of Type 2 diabetes.

The authors say that as global rates of Type 2 diabetes are likely to double by 2030, interventions to prevent the condition will have an important role to play in future health policies. The study findings have large implications for public health policy, however, the authors note

that if lifestyle changes are to be truly effective more needs to be done to support people to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Source: BMJ-British Medical Journal

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