



*Take Care of Your Heart:
Manage Your Diabetes for Future Generations*
by Yvette Roubideaux, M.D., M.P.H.

Chair, American Indian and Alaska Native Work Group, National Diabetes Education Program, Former President of the Association of American Indian Physicians, and Assistant Professor, Mel and Enid Zuckerman Arizona College of Public Health, University of Arizona

Diabetes and cardiovascular disease are threatening our American Indian and Alaska Native communities, but we can fight back. The good news is that we can protect ourselves and future generations by managing our diabetes and preventing heart attacks and strokes.

Here are some facts: American Indian and Alaska Natives are more than twice as likely to have diabetes as non-Hispanic whites of similar age, and one in four American Indians and Alaska Natives will die of a heart attack or stroke. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, current cigarette smoking, and obesity raise the risk of cardiovascular disease even higher.

We must act now! Many American Indian and Alaska Native health professionals and organizations are joining with the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) to promote new materials tailored for American Indians and Alaska Natives: “Take Care of Your Heart: Manage Your Diabetes for Future Generations.”

The materials, adapted from NDEP’s nationwide *Be Smart About Your Heart* campaign, promote the good news throughout Indian Country that we can prevent heart attacks and strokes by controlling our blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol. A tip sheet, print PSA and colorful poster have been developed. The message is motivational and brings hope to our communities.

All people with diabetes should take action by asking their health care provider what their blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure and cholesterol numbers *are*, what they *should be*, and what *actions* they should take to reach those target numbers.

Blood glucose (sugar), as measured by the A1C test, should be checked at least twice a year. Blood pressure should be checked at each visit and cholesterol should be tested at least once a year. For most people with diabetes, the goals are A1C below 7, blood pressure below 130/80, and LDL cholesterol below 100.

Asking these few simple questions could help save our lives.

To win this battle we must work together. Share the good news and helpful advice in *your* community. Help people with diabetes take care of their heart, manage their diabetes, and live long and healthy lives – for them, their families and for future generations.

For more information about diabetes and cardiovascular disease, call 1-800-438-5383s or visit <http://www.ndep.nih.gov>.