

Alabama's River Region Steps Program

Helping control diabetes



What is the public health problem?

Diabetes and obesity are significant public health issues in Alabama's River Region. Obesity is a risk factor for diabetes, which can lead to serious complications such as blindness, kidney damage, lower-limb amputations, and cardiovascular disease. According to 2006* Steps Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data, in the Alabama River Region's five counties (Autauga, Elmore, Lowndes, Macon, and Montgomery),

- Almost 10% of adult residents have diabetes.
- More than 67% are overweight or obese.

How Steps is responding

The Steps Program partnered with the Montgomery Area Community Wellness Coalition and Baptist Center for Diabetes to train Wellness Advocates in nutrition, physical activity, disease prevention and detection, diabetes management, and cultural competency.

- Wellness Advocates are assigned to patients with diabetes to provide them with one-on-one assistance in setting health and wellness goals, self-management guidance, and vital disease prevention education.
- Diabetes monitoring kits, lancets, and testing strips are donated to clients, and they are taught how to correctly use the supplies.
- Clients meet with Wellness Advocates monthly, test their blood glucose or sugar levels four or more times a day, inject insulin as instructed or use

an insulin pump (if necessary), record and track their results, and receive intensive instructions on diabetes, nutrition, and physical activity.

What is the impact?

- Among the clients who participated in the Wellness Case Management program,
 - 76% increased their knowledge and skills in recognizing health risks associated with diabetes.
 - 38% documented a daily blood sugar check as well as a daily foot exam.
 - 27% stabilized their blood sugar levels.
- 80% of wellness case management clients were assigned to a medical home. Establishment of a medical home has been shown to decrease the instances of emergency room and inpatient visits, thereby reducing hospital costs.

Why this program is working

Early detection, improved preventive care practices, and better education on diabetes self-management can help people with diabetes control their levels of blood glucose, blood pressure, and blood lipids, which helps reduce the occurrence of diabetes complications.[†]

* Most recent data available

[†] http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/TipsFeel_Eng.pdf