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ADMINISTRATIVE TIDBITS

Seventeen facilitators from across Montana have already scheduled classes this year! You have done an outstanding job promoting and holding successful classes. Please read some of the heartwarming feedback from Katrin’s class in this edition’s Facilitator Spotlight. A handful of you have said you are planning a class this spring—a perfect time to hold classes, but a season that always flies by! We hope to see notices of classes coming our way soon!

How important is good oral health to controlling diabetes? Gum disease can actually make it more difficult to control blood sugar levels. Tonette Hollingsworth of the Montana Department of Health and Human Services Oral Health Program shares more about diabetes and dental health in this newsletter. Find helpful links for more information in the Toolbox section.

Last but not least, Tuesday, March 27, is American Diabetes Association® Alert Day. Mountain-Pacific will be highlighting additional tools and information that may be useful to you. To find them, find us on Facebook.

Hats off to the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP)™ facilitators of Montana for delivering knowledge and better health to more than 500 Montanans! Thanks so much for all you do!

Sincerely,
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CLASS SCHEDULE

- **Ashland | Feb. 13 – Mar. 20**
  Heritage Living Center
  Facilitators: Ann Haley and Angie Sioux

- **Butte | Feb. 20 – Mar. 27**
  Centennial Gardens
  Facilitator: Kelli Kahtani

- **Big Sandy | Mar. 8 – Apr. 12**
  Big Sandy Medical Center
  Facilitator: Janell Barber

- **Miles City | Mar. 14 – Apr. 18**
  Miles City Public Library
  Facilitator: Tara Andrews

- **Choteau | Mar. 15 – Apr. 19**
  Choteau Senior Center
  Facilitator: Jane Wolery

- **Bozeman | Apr. 16 – May 21**
  Bozeman Senior Social Center
  Facilitator: Julie Belschwender
Diabetes problems that affect the eyes, kidneys and feet are well known, but the impact of poor blood sugar control can have just as an important impact on the mouth.

People who have diabetes are at higher risk for periodontal (gum) disease, which is an infection in the tissue and bone that support teeth. Left untreated, the infection progresses, and people often experience bad breath, pain, loose teeth and even tooth loss. This can significantly impact nutrition, because eating a healthy diet of fruits, vegetables and lean meats becomes more difficult. Even people with dentures should be aware of sores in the mouth to prevent mouth infections and altered nutrition.

Good oral health promotes total body health. Bacteria in the mouth can contribute to heart disease and stroke, both health risks for people with diabetes. Alternations in the vascular and immune systems increase the risk for dental problems in people with uncontrolled diabetes. Complications related to diabetes also make treating periodontal disease more difficult, due to the decreased ability to fight off the bad bacteria in the mouth. Getting regular dental exams and cleanings will prevent the start of the disease.

The relationship goes both ways. Research suggests untreated periodontal disease can make it more difficult to control blood sugar levels.

What can DEEP facilitators do to promote dental health and support overall health?

- Ask about frequency of dental visits.
- Facilitate discussions about home dental habits, just like foot care.
- Ask about gum disease and talk about the relationship between diabetes and mouth health.
- Keep in mind that we need to be healthy from head to toe, including the mouth, to prevent and control chronic diseases.

To keep a healthy mouth, advise people with diabetes to:

- Control their blood sugar.
- Brush and floss daily.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Visit the dentist and ask about periodontal assessments (probe readings).
- Talk to the dentist about blood sugar control issues and bleeding gums or bad breath.

Help sound the alarm on American Diabetes Association Alert Day, coming up on Tuesday, March 27. Get more information, tools and resources here.

For more information:
https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/diabetes/more-info
Q: What is your background before becoming a DEEP™ facilitator?
A: I grew up as an athlete, where food, nutrition and human performance were important, but until I completed my undergraduate degree, I did not quite understand how the body worked all together as one unit. Throughout my undergraduate career, I spent time in degrees related to teaching, health and human performance and dietetics. This has been incredibly helpful and exciting to have the opportunity to use some of the knowledge from those classes.

Q: What do you like most about becoming a DEEP facilitator?
A: I get to share new knowledge with people who have had diabetes for less than one year or for 20 or more years. The excitement the participants have when the “light bulb” comes on after so many years and finally understanding a process is like nothing else.

Q: What tips have you discovered about teaching DEEP that you would like to share with other facilitators?
A: Sometimes you just have to go with what the group is really interested in. The group I recently taught was not on the seemingly basic level of diabetes. They were interested really working on improving their quality of life. This helped me to grow as a facilitator, because I learned so much more about diabetes as well.

Q: What have you heard from your participants about the DEEP class?
A: Several participants in my most recent class have had diabetes for 10 or more years, and after the first day of class I thought, What else can I teach these people? I quickly learned that some of the basic components of diabetes are challenging to explain in a physician’s office, and this [class] is the opportunity to share the important details of this challenging, interrelated disease, which really inspires me to continue holding classes.

Participants have said…
- “Overcoming the barriers is so hard, but I think I have some tools to help me now.”
- “I have had diabetes for five years and other complications, but understanding what medications affect my other health problems has helped me to ask specific questions to my provider.”
- “I did not know that your cells keep working long after physical activity. No wonder I feel better after working out several days in a row.”
- “The kidney function has never been explained that way. It makes so much more sense now.”
- “I am so glad I came to this class. I learned a lot from you, but I learned so much from the other attendees. It makes me feel like I am not alone, and sometimes my friends just don’t understand what I go through.”

FACILITATOR SPOTLIGHT: KATRIN FINCH