

HEALTHIER YOU

NHS DIABETES PREVENTION PROGRAMME

Diabetes ambassador Alan Kirk is passionate about prevention.

Alan, aged 69 from Chesterfield, was diagnosed with the condition 15 years ago, just six months after his wife was also diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.

Since being diagnosed he has been working tirelessly to raise awareness of the condition and offer support and advice to people across North Derbyshire.

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that needs careful management and can have serious health consequences.

Alan said: "My wife had a blood test at the GPs and was diagnosed with type 2 and she told me I should get tested.

"I put it off - just as a lot of men do but six months later I finally had the blood test.

"When my results came in the GP told me I'd be in hospital in half an hour as my blood sugar was so high. It was 19 and the normal range should be between five and seven."



However both Alan and his wife have managed to control the condition over the years with a strict combination of medication, diet and exercise.

Alan's Type 2 diabetes is hereditary but nearly 80% of cases are not and can be prevented with simple lifestyle changes.

Even with his condition under control Alan needs to stick to a strict, lifelong regime in order to avoid serious health issues.

He has to check his blood sugar and inject himself with insulin twice a day as well as take medication and be very controlled in his diet and exercise.

Otherwise complications could set in very quickly including nerve damage, eye and leg ulcers, stroke and heart attacks.

He said: "One of the first things we had to do was cut out sugar almost completely. The first shopping trip we did took over two hours as we had to read every packet and tin.

"Labelling wasn't as good years ago as it is now so it took a long time to find out what we could and couldn't eat."

Alan sits on the North Derbyshire CCG diabetes board and is heavily involved in diabetes education

He also works tirelessly for Diabetes UK and has recently been awarded the Midlands Area Volunteer of the Year.

He said: "I work on roadshows where we do blood pressure, weight and waist measurements. We then assess people's risk of developing type 2.

"If it's high then we tell them to get a blood test from their GP. At a recent roadshow I assessed 20 people and referred 19 to their doctor – if you widen that out countywide then that's a lot of people who could be at risk without knowing it!"

Patients at high risk of Type 2 diabetes in Derby and Derbyshire are benefitting from a new programme to help them avoid developing the condition.

The Healthier You: Derby and Derbyshire Diabetes Prevention Programme aims to help patients at risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes to make changes to their lifestyles.

GPs invite people they know to be at high risk to enrol on the programme for tailored help.

The nine month programme, delivered by ICS Healthcare, includes education on healthy eating and lifestyle changes as well as bespoke physical exercise sessions, all of which have been proven to reduce the risk of developing the disease.

Alan strongly believes in prevention being better than cure wherever possible and supports the new Derby and Derbyshire Diabetes Prevention Programme.

He said: "I would encourage everyone to get a blood test if they think they might be at risk - it's just a simple blood test. But lots of people have their heads in the sand about diabetes.

"An early test is vital to either prevent the condition developing or enable you to control it effectively."

"If you are invited to take part in the new Derby and Derbyshire diabetes prevention programme do take it up.

"The two simplest things you can do to prevent Type 2 are making changes to your diet and the amount of exercise that you do and that's what the programme helps you to do."

For information and support around diabetes visit www.derbyshire.gov.uk/diabetes

To learn more about the Derby and Derbyshire Diabetes Prevention Programme visit www.preventing-diabetes.co.uk