

# Focus on Diabetes and Hypertension

**Shedding light on health research to make a healthier community.**

## VCU Engages Community Experts to Create a Research Agenda for Diabetes and Hypertension

The selection of research topics is usually done by academic researchers and funding agencies, however community and academic researchers from Engaging Richmond, a longstanding community-university partnership, want to change that.

Community researchers from Engaging Richmond and staff from the VCU Center on Society and Health recently completed the first demonstration of the SEED Method, a new process to engage community stakeholders in developing research questions on health related topics. According to Dr. Emily Zimmerman, principal investigator for the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) funded SEED project, engaging

stakeholders from the very beginning of the research process is critical to help steer researchers and funders toward answering questions that address the concerns, needs, and values of patients, health service providers, and other stakeholders.

This demonstration took place in the East End of

Richmond, VA, and focused on diet compliance for diabetes and hypertension. Engaging Richmond spent many months planning, recruiting, and conducting focus groups and interviews with various stakeholders. In addition, three groups of community experts (patients and service providers) worked over a period of three months to create conceptual models diagramming factors that are important contributors to diet compliance among those with diabetes and hypertension. Using these models, all three groups then developed and prioritized research questions that they felt were important to address. By engaging stakeholders with different backgrounds and experiences, the demonstration showed how these groups had unique perspectives and concerns that informed their conceptual models and choice of research questions. These

*The stakeholders prioritized 19 research questions on a variety of topics that emerged related to diet compliance and diabetes/hypertension self-management. A summary of the topics addressed include:*

- Mental health and substance abuse
- Health care quality and communication
- The physical, social, and political environment
- Health behaviors and health education
- Self-management and clinical care
- Economic and health policies

research questions will be used to inform a research agenda that will be disseminated to the community, researchers, policymakers, advocates, and funders.

A second demonstration testing the SEED Method in rural Virginia will kick-off on November 5<sup>th</sup> in Martinsville, VA. The community researchers at this site will be looking to create research questions around respiratory cancer outcomes.



by Emily Zimmerman, PhD, MS Associate Professor and Senior Researcher VCU Dept. of Family Medicine and Population Health VCU Center on Society and Health  
**Dr. Zimmerman's research focuses on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations. She is the Principal Investigator of the SEED Method study.**

**Because diabetes and hypertension rates in the East End are among some of the highest in the city, community residents on the Engaging Richmond community-university partnership had previously identified this as a priority health need.**

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### ENGAGING RICHMOND IS A COMMUNITY-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP

Its mission is to explore and investigate social determinants of health through mixed methods research in order to find and propose effective community-based solutions.

#### ER MEMBERS ON THE SEED RESEARCH TEAM

Chanel Bea	Amber Haley	Chimere Miles	Audrey Smith
Sheila Goode	Sharon Herman	Khadijah Muhammad	Albert Walker
Danita Gregory	Brenda Kenney	Valerie Burrell-Muhammad	Travis White

### Diabetes: What is it?

Diabetes Mellitus is a group of diseases that affect the hormone insulin, and how the body uses blood sugar, causing blood sugar levels to be too high.

- **PRE-DIABETES:** A reversible condition in which blood sugar levels are above average and can lead to diabetes but are not high enough to be considered diabetes
- **TYPE I:** Body does not produce insulin
- **TYPE II:** Body does not use insulin properly, as cells have become resistant

**WHAT IS INSULIN?** Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas that helps the body use or store blood sugar obtained from food.

#### WHAT INCREASES THE RISK OF DIABETES?

People are more likely to develop Type II diabetes as they get older and if they: are overweight, are physically inactive, have hypertension or high blood cholesterol levels, or have a close relative with diabetes.



### Hypertension: What is it?

Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is a condition in which the force of the blood against the walls of a person's arteries is high enough to cause health problems.

#### WHAT INCREASES THE RISK OF HYPERTENSION?

People are more likely to develop high blood pressure as they get older and if they: are overweight, are physically inactive, have diabetes, use tobacco, drink too much alcohol, have high levels of stress, have a diet high in sodium, or have close relatives with high blood pressure.

## Research Light

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The newsletter sheds light on research and knowledge that can improve quality of life. It aims to encourage community conversations about research results and their implications and provide information to individuals and families on various health-related topics. For more information, contact Albert Walker at [albert.walker@vcuhealth.org](mailto:albert.walker@vcuhealth.org).



## Dietary Recommendations for Diabetes and Hypertension

### WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDED DIET?

A diet that emphasizes nutritious foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and low in calories and fat, such as low-fat dairy products and lean meat is recommended as an important part of lowering blood pressure and managing diabetes.

### WHAT FOODS SHOULD I AVOID?

- Limit the following foods:
- Sugar-sweetened drinks (soda, juice, sweet tea)
- Processed foods (chips, packaged noodles, fast food)
- Sodium
- Cholesterol
- Alcohol (Moderate amounts of alcohol includes no more than 1 drink a day for women, and 2 drinks a day for men)

The American Diabetes Association recommends using the Plate Method as a simple and effective way to manage blood sugar levels and lose weight:

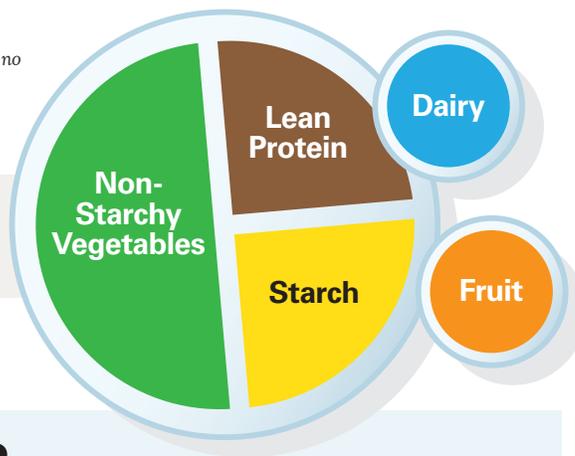
Use a 9-inch plate and divide the plate into the following sections:

**NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES:** Broccoli, spinach, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant

**STARCH:** Corn, sweet potato, rice, pasta

**LEAN PROTEIN:** Turkey, chicken, fish, beans, lentils, cheese

**ADDITIONAL SERVING OF FRUIT AND/OR DAIRY**



The Plate Method is a simple way to manage blood sugar and lose weight. Use a 9-inch plate and divide the plate like this.

## Did you know?

- Almost 70 million American adults (29%) have high blood pressure
- Only about half of people (52%) with high blood pressure have their condition under control
- High blood pressure costs the nation \$46 billion each year
- Nearly 9% of adults have been diagnosed with diabetes
- In the East End of Richmond, VA, rates for diabetes and hypertension are higher than city and state averages:
  - Nearly 20% of African American men and women report being diagnosed with diabetes
  - 39% of African American men and 53% of African American women report being diagnosed with high blood pressure
- Adults with diabetes are at a higher risk of heart disease and stroke
  - Heart disease and stroke are the number 1 causes of death and disability among people with Type 2 diabetes.

## Trouble communicating with your doctor?

A good doctor-patient relationship is more of a partnership, so it's very important to develop an open relationship. To make communicating easier, try these tips to make the most of a doctor's appointment.

- ✓ Make a list of questions to ask your doctor.
- ✓ Bring a friend or family member for support.
- ✓ Bring all of your medications with you.
- ✓ Speak openly — your health concerns are important.
- ✓ If you can't understand something, ask questions.
- ✓ Take notes of what you and your doctor discussed.
- ✓ Get your doctor's contact information.
- ✓ Remember that nurses and other professionals can help.



## Local Resources for Healthy Eating

**SHALOM FARMS FARM STAND**  
Creighton Court Resource Center  
804-646-4511

**EAST DISTRICT FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**  
804-644-4496

**PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOOD PANTRY**  
804-780-1195

**HEALTHY CORNER STORE INITIATIVE**  
Song's Market, 25th Street Market, Fine Food

## Help for those with Diabetes and Hypertension

### NATIONAL RESOURCES

**American Heart Association**  
www.heart.org

**American Diabetes Association**  
www.diabetes.org

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
www.cdc.gov

### RICHMOND-AREA RESOURCES

**Local Resource Centers**  
Creighton Court, Mosby,  
Gilpin, East District

**Center for High Blood Pressure**  
www.rahbpc.org  
804-359-9375

**Vernon J. Harris Diabetes Self-Management**  
http://cahealthnet.org/services/diabetes-care  
804-253-1976

**Bon Secours at Richmond Community Hospital**  
804-545-3232