

Rockdale Citizen

RMC to hold diabetes fair

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CONYERS - Rockdale Medical Center will hold its fourth annual Diabetes Health Fair on Friday where free health screenings will be offered and health professionals will be on hand to answer questions about the disease.

The fair will be held from 9 a.m. to noon in RMC's East Tower classrooms. Free testing will be available for diabetes risk factors, blood glucose testing, blood pressure, body fat analysis and foot exams.

Vendor booths will also open for diabetes products, services and health information. Visitors can register for door prizes during the fair.

The featured speaker this year will be pharmacist Mahlon L. Davidson. Davidson will speak at 11 a.m. on the topic, "New Medications to Treat Diabetes."

With 23.6 million Americans now diagnosed with diabetes, learning to manage the disease is a major health issue and expense. In Rockdale County, there are about 5,000 people diagnosed with diabetes.

Cheryl Elder, a diabetes educator at RMC, said education is key for those already dealing with the disease and others who are at risk of being diagnosed with the illness.

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life.

The cause of diabetes continues to be a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles, Elder said.

Along with doctors, exercise physiologists and dietitians who will be available to offer advice, the fair's free testing can offer some insight that people can followed up with their primary doctors, Elder said.

One test to be offered at the fair, a A1C blood test, will give a person a good picture of the average blood glucose levels for the past two or three months. Elder said the test helps those determine whether they have diabetes and help those who do better manage their blood sugar levels.

"For some, it may be a relief to know that 'Oh, my sugar level is doing OK,' while for others who are already diagnosed, the fair will have resources to hopefully help them better their lives with diabetes," she said.

Foot exams will be offered at the fair because the first signs of diabetes is usually numbness or tingling in the feet due to the effect high blood sugar levels have on nerves in the body. Blood circulation to feet can be poor due to their distance from the heart, Elder said.