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## 'Tis the season to keep your diabetes in check

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There are countless National Health Observances recognized during specific days or months throughout the year.

The goal of these observances is to bring awareness and education to varied health issues, causes, diseases, and more.

This month, one in particular is especially timely — American Diabetes Month.

Observed every November in conjunction with the American Diabetes Association (ADA), American Diabetes Month brings attention to diabetes, a disease that touches the lives of over 29 million Americans and can have devastating health outcomes.

According to the ADA, this year's theme "This Is Diabetes" will, "showcase real-life stories of friends, families and neighbors managing the day-to-day triumphs and challenges of the disease."

As the ADA notes, diabetes is a daily focus for those living with the disease. And as we approach the holiday season, those with diabetes will have yet another challenge to conquer as the abundance of treats and bigger meals, and that bag (or three) of leftover Halloween candy seems to be never ending. Staying focused, having a plan and setting goals can help you take the small steps needed to stay healthy into the New Year.

Another 2016 theme from the National Diabetes Education Program, "Managing Diabetes — It's Not Easy, But It's Worth It," highlights the importance of managing diabetes to prevent related health problems such as heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, vision loss, and amputation. This theme reminds people, who may be struggling with the stresses of managing their disease, they are not alone.

This time of year, as we are surrounded by friends, family members or even as you say, "Hi, how are you?" to that familiar face you see each morning — remember you're not in this alone. Managing diabetes is a team effort that requires participation from you, your health care team, and other networks of support.

Looking ahead, if you know it will be hard for you to resist over indulging in your favorite sugar cookies or that extra sugary cocktail, ask your support team for help.

When it's hard to see through the line of "not so good for you treats," have your support member remind you, that "treat" isn't worth risking your health.

Experimenting in the kitchen and a little preparation can serve as another one of the tricks you have up your sleeve to face the holidays head-on.

The ADA has a dedicated page to Holiday Meal Planning on [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org) with ways to fit in sweets such as baking

your own cookies, apples or making sugar-free pudding.

Revising recipes — replacing up to half of the sugar in a recipe with a sugar substitute — is another way to get still-great-tasting desserts that are healthier. The ADA also reminds, "If you decide to have a treat, remember to cut back on the other carbohydrate in your meal to help keep blood glucose levels on track."

So, what do all these themes and messages really mean? Diabetes is a serious disease that requires continuous effort, attention, education and support, along with dedication to self-management and partnership with your health care provider.

Although diabetes may be top-of-mind at all other times of the year, it can be hard to keep it up there when so many other thoughts and "to-do's" are beating out diabetes for that #1 spot in your mind.

Take that Halloween candy out of your bag of tricks, add these tips and you're ready to keep your diabetes under control and ring in 2017 with a healthy you.

**THE DIABETES** Educators at Sturdy Memorial Hospital work with those with diabetes to assist in overcoming barriers to healthy behaviors, providing educational and disease support, and improving overall health. To learn more about the Diabetes Management Program, please call 508-236-7497.