

fat and going vegan

ing Diabetes Without Drugs." The event was sponsored by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, a D.C.-based group that Barnard founded.

His goal, Barnard said, is to lower blood sugar in people with diabetes while easing other complications like weight gain, and to encourage a healthier diet for Americans who are at risk for diseases.

"I'm a big believer in jumping in early," Barnard said. "Kids these days are in the worst shape that they've ever been in the



Barnard

country. They are at high risk for diabetes, and other conditions go along with it," adding that "point being, you don't wait until your doctor hands you a diabetes diagnosis to make a change. I recommend a vegan diet for everybody."

The audience, mostly middle-age and older adults, seemed to agree. Barnard questioned them about traditional medical methods, like doctors telling patients that carbohydrates, rather than too much meat and dairy, were the biggest problem in weight gain. When he and Webb asked how many of them had tried vegan or vegetarian recipes, several hands went up.

"We can choose healthy carb foods," Barnard told them, citing Asia and Africa as examples in the world with high-carb diets yet low rates of diabetes and other diseases. "Carbohydrates are not the enemy." He encouraged the crowd to choose carbs with a low glycemic index, like beans and whole grains.

Barnard also referred to a research study he completed with George Washington University faculty earlier this year, comparing a vegan diet to the American Diabetes Association's eating guidelines. The study found that the group of subjects on the vegan diet tended to lose more weight than their counterparts.

Barnard was careful to clarify

that a diet change cannot cure diabetes completely. "Diabetes is a serious condition. You should be under care of a good health care provider," he said in an interview before the event. "What happens [in the diet] is blood sugar gets under better control, weight comes down, cholesterol comes down. For a great many people, that means they can cut down on meds but let your doctor make that decision. Will you get off all your medication? Maybe, maybe not."

Marcie Weinstein of Baltimore, attending because she has a daughter with diabetes, said she found the information to be helpful. "Even though my daughter isn't able to go off insulin because of the type of diabetes she has, these kinds of changes to her diet can still really help her blood sugar control."

Changing to a vegan diet can be as easy as cooking with vegetable broth rather than oil, steaming food rather than frying it, and using applesauce for baking in place of margarine, Barnard said. Though he challenged the audience to try a vegan diet for a three-week trial period, Barnard cautioned everyone not to make the changes permanent without consulting a doctor.

"Don't stick your toe in the swimming pool; you have to jump in," he said, adding that lightening the whole diet and using "transition foods" like veggie burgers and "phoney baloney" will ultimately quench the body's desire for fat.

Webb cited her support for organic farming, saying that the lack of pesticides "keep[s] flavors nice and clean," which also reduces the need for salt and margarine.

"Keep the integrity of your foods," she advised one member of the audience who was asking for tips on where to buy.

Holly Eckhard of Rockville said she came to learn new vegetarian recipes and was not disappointed with Webb's demonstration. "You saw how she did them in 10 to 15 minutes; the recipes look great and are easy," she said.