Babies in arms, tears in crisis, adults in detour — primary care nurses see them all.

Dealing with everything from runny noses to diabetes to sexually transmitted infections, they offer no-nonsense information, non-judgmental advice and, occasionally, a tissue to wipe away tears.

The job can be stressful, frustrating and demanding, but ultimately it’s satisfying and even exciting for Melissa Adamson and Lea Smith.

“There’s a lot of variety to it and lots of change, and it’s really rewarding,” says Smith, who works at ACCESS Sunset Community Health Centre on Main Street.

She and Adamson find it rewarding to educate a role that’s more expansive than the title suggests.

“Half of my time is spent seeing people individually, so I would succeed in the pregnancy counseling, information, abstention referrals, contraception counseling, STI followup, pre-natal care, information around parentheses, counseling, menopause,” she says.

“And the other half of my role is to do community outreach and community development around sexual health.”

That means she runs programs for youth, elementary, middle and high schools attached to Rossook House, as well as for girls at Manitoba Youth Centre, adults, through the street project and any other clients who require that kind of service.

She’s also a resource for doctors, other primary care nurses and other nurses at the centre, and she handles community followup in cases of HIV or hepatitis exposure.

During an interview about her job, she mentions to Smith that it would be a public service to urge all women to get their Pap smear to be tested for HIV. And she wonders how much the accidental blood exposure should go towards the cost of an urgent care centre immediately, because early treatment can protect the immune system.

People who have primary insurance and prescription coverage through a three-tier system usually have their medication assistance have access to good-endoscopic hepatitis medication, which can cost $550, but there is a protection gap.

“If they’re working poor, they can’t get that covered, and it’s really hard wanting to deal with someone who really needs to be on that medication and can’t afford it,” she says.

“Somebody is faced with making really tough decisions because they can’t afford the medication.”

 Hepatitis Cديد

Primary care nurses try to get patients to focus on prevention before treatment is necessary.

Adamson tries to seize upon teachable moments when she sees patients at the Atikok Street Community Health Centre. If somebody is in too big to be tested for an STI, she’ll talk about sexual health, for example.

“Are there opportunities to work on health promotion and disease prevention when adults come in for physcials and when the centre holds walk-in clinics.

“You want to give those people the knowledge to empower them to manage their own lifestyles and their own lifestyle changes so that they can prevent those chronic diseases from happening,” Adamson says.

“People want a way to take control of that. We’re talking about their lifestyle choices and their health choices, which is what makes the job exciting,” she says.

Adamson particularly enjoys working with babies and teens, as well as outreach in the community. She says building relationships is important. Weekly teen clinics at the North End Wellness Centre have given her time on that front, and diabetes classes at the same venue have been surprisingly well attended.

They deal with complications of diabetes, managing diabetes, emotional aspects of living with the disease and prevention, both at a one-way information session. Participants are encouraged to suggest topics and share their experiences.

“There’s a lot of power in what the group has to teach, so we value that input,” she says.

It’s very frustrating to live with,” Klapecki says. “First of all, you don’t know what to eat type of thing. It’s hard to discipline myself to a specific diet. Basically you’ve been eating the same things for 45 years and all of a sudden you’ve got to start eating differently.”

To help combat the disease, Klapecki has made significant changes in his life, including sticking to a diet of mostly fruit and vegetables, avoiding alcohol and changing other habits. While staying active also plays a role in controlling diabetes, he is somewhat restricted in that area due to a deteriorating lower back disk ailment.

Despite the activity setback, Klapecki has made positive strides in reducing his blood sugar levels and working toward controlling the type 2 diabetes, the advice taking the disease seriously — whether you have it or not.

“If you want to live, keep an eye on your blood sugar levels and make changes early enough, even though you get set in your ways and it’s difficult to change,” he urges. “Take it seriously from the beginning. Listen to your doctor. If your prediabetic don’t think it’s (type 2) not going to happen because it can already creep up. If I had lost some weight, eaten properly and exercised I probably wouldn’t have this problem right now.”

Manitoba has one of the highest rates of diabetes in Canada. Not only is the number growing, the age of those suffering from it is lowering.

Manitoba has the highest incidence rate of type 2 diabetes in children in Canada at 12.45 per 100,000 children per year — more than 12 times higher than other provinces.

According to Manitoba Health, about 95 per cent of adult diabetes in Manitoba is type 2.

“As a nurse in the primary care clinic, we do a lot of chronic disease management including diabetes and it has become very apparent that health care professionals like myself need to focus on the prevention of chronic disease,” says Tanis Olson, a primary care nurse who participated in a research project focusing on type 2 diabetes and prediabetes in adults.

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body is no longer able to properly use the sugar from the foodstuffs it consumes. Either the body does not produce enough insulin in the pancreas or use the insulin it produces properly. This leads to high levels of glucose in the blood, which can damage organs, blood vessels and nerves. High insulin levels are an energy source for the body.

Type 2 diabetes is more likely to occur in Asian, South Asian, African, Aboriginal and Hispanic populations.

Prediabetes is the state in which the blood sugar is found to be higher than normal but not at the level that defines diabetes. Nearly 50 per cent of people with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes.
Continued from page 6

Fostering awareness

winnipegfreepress.com

amazing opportunity i was really fortunate to have had," olson

research opportunities when this pilot project became available.

reach out and screen high risk diabetes populations for type 2
diabetes and prediabetes to determine if early intervention can

prediabetes and undiagnosed type 2 diabetes in winnipeg," olson

diabetes and prediabetes to determine if early intervention can

continue to work toward increased public awareness.

research involved screened 240 adults in winnipeg between the ages of 40 and 74 using an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test – a two

high fasting state and after a measured amount of glucose in the body.

As a diabetes educator, we now know the earlier we first those that

Cases of prediabetes and undiagnosed type 2 diabetes in winnipeg

reach out and screen high risk diabetes populations for type 2
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