



Diabetes 101

What is diabetes?

Diabetes happens when blood glucose levels are above normal on an ongoing basis. This can happen when your body doesn't produce enough insulin or can't use the insulin it's creating. Sugar then builds up in your blood.

Diabetes can cause serious health complications, including heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, and lower-extremity amputations. Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.

What are the symptoms of diabetes?

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme hunger
- Sudden vision change
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Feeling very tired much of the time
- Very dry skin
- Sores that are slow to heal
- More infections than usual

Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pains may accompany any of these symptoms in the abrupt onset of insulin-dependent diabetes, now called type 1 diabetes.

If you or your family members are experiencing any of these symptoms, you should visit your doctor for diagnosis as soon as possible.

What is the difference between types 1 and 2?

Type 1 diabetes, which was previously called insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) or juvenile-onset diabetes, may account for about five percent of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes, which was previously called non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) or adult-onset diabetes, may account for about 90-95 percent of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

Gestational diabetes is a type of diabetes that only pregnant women get. If not treated, it can cause problems for mothers and babies. Gestational diabetes develops in 1-10 percent of all pregnancies, but usually disappears when a pregnancy is over. Other specific types of diabetes resulting from specific genetic syndromes, surgery, drugs, malnutrition, infections, and other illnesses may account for one to five percent of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

How can I treat diabetes?

Healthy eating, physical activity, and insulin injections are the basic therapies for type 1 diabetes. The amount of insulin taken must be balanced with food intake and daily activities. Blood glucose levels must be closely monitored through frequent blood glucose testing.

Healthy eating, physical activity, and blood glucose testing are the basic therapies for type 2 diabetes. In addition, many people with type 2 diabetes require oral medication, insulin, or both to control their blood glucose levels.

People with diabetes must take responsibility for their day-to-day care, and keep blood glucose levels from going too low or too high.

People with diabetes should see a health care provider who will monitor their diabetes control and help them learn to manage their diabetes. In addition, people with diabetes may see endocrinologists, who may specialize in diabetes care; ophthalmologists for eye examinations; podiatrists for routine foot care; and dietitians and diabetes educators who teach the skills needed for daily diabetes management.

-Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).