

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose levels are above normal. Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose, or sugar, for our bodies to use for energy.

The pancreas, an organ that lies near the stomach, makes a hormone called insulin to help glucose get into the cells of our bodies.

When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't use its own insulin as well as it should. This causes sugar to build up in your blood.

Diabetes can cause serious health complications including heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, and lower-extremity amputations.

What are the symptoms?

- ◆ Frequent urination
- ◆ Excessive thirst
- ◆ Unexplained weight loss
- ◆ Extreme hunger
- ◆ Sudden vision changes
- ◆ 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 some of these symptoms in the abrupt onset of insulin-dependent diabetes, now called type 1 diabetes.

Types of diabetes

Type 1 Diabetes

Previously called insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) or juvenile-onset diabetes, may account for about 5% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

Type 2 Diabetes

Previously called non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) or adult-onset diabetes, may account for about 90% to 95% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

Gestational diabetes

A type of diabetes that only pregnant women get. If not treated, it can cause problems for mothers and babies. Gestational diabetes develops in 2% to 10% 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 1% to 5% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

What are the risk factors for type 2 diabetes?

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include older age, obesity, family history of diabetes, prior history of gestational diabetes, impaired glucose tolerance, physical inactivity, and race/ethnicity.

African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, and some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at particularly high risk for type 2 diabetes.

Obesity is also associated with higher risk. Women who have had gestational diabetes have a 35% to 60% chance of developing diabetes in the next 10–20 years.

Complications caused by diabetes

- ◆ Heart disease and stroke
- ◆ Nerve damage
- ◆ Diabetic retinopathy
- ◆ Kidney disease
- ◆ Foot problems
- ◆ Sexual dysfunction
- ◆ Miscarriage and stillbirth
- ◆ Very dry skin
- ◆ Sores that are slow to heal
- ◆ More infections than usual
- ◆ Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pains may accompany some of these symptoms in the abrupt onset of insulin-dependent diabetes, now called type 1 diabetes.



Treatment

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 every three months who will monitor their diabetes control and help them learn to manage their diabetes.

In addition, people with diabetes may see the eye specialist for eye examinations; and dietitians and diabetes educators who teach the skills needed for daily diabetes management.



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Diabetes



Are you the 1 in 3
at risk for diabetes?

14 April 2015

