

Diabetes Mellitus
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An estimated 18.2 people in the United States (6.3% of the population) have diabetes, but a third of those people don't even know they have it! Diabetes is a leading cause of death in all industrialized nations. Diabetes is a disorder in which the body cannot regulate the amount of sugar in the blood. Sugar, or glucose, in the blood is what we need for energy — energy to walk, run, and just go about our day-to-day chores. Glucose is made in the body by the liver, from the foods we eat. Blood glucose level is regulated by several hormones, one of which is insulin. Insulin is produced by the pancreas, a small organ near the stomach that also secretes important enzymes that help us in digesting our food.

People with diabetes either do not produce enough insulin (Type I) or cannot use insulin properly (Type II), or both. Without enough insulin, the glucose in the blood cannot move into cells for energy, but instead, remains in the blood. This not only harms the cells that need the glucose, but also damages certain organs and tissues that are exposed to the high blood glucose levels.

Risk Factors for Diabetes

Controllable

Exercise: 30 minutes of brisk walking or more strenuous exercise five or more days per week

Weight Control: maintain your weight within 10-15 lbs. of your recommended weight

Alcohol: Fewer than 7 drinks per week is recommended, never more than 2-3 per day

High blood pressure: Check it frequently and follow your health care provider's advice about treatment

High blood triglyceride (fat) levels: have it checked at least once by age 50, and treat as indicated by your health care provider

Uncontrollable (Forewarned is forearmed!)

Genetics: Type II diabetes tends to "run in families," so know your family health history

Age: Be grateful for every year God gives you, but know that the risk for diabetes increases with age, starting at about 45 years

Race: Type I diabetes is more common in non-Hispanic white persons of Northern European descent, followed by African Americans and Hispanic Americans, and is relatively rare in those of Asian descent.

Conversely, Type II diabetes is more common in African American, Hispanic, Native American and Japanese populations than in non-Hispanic whites

Sex: Diabetes is slightly more common in men than in women

Diabetes during **pregnancy** or giving birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds

Once a person has diabetes, what can be done to manage the disease and reduce complications?

1. Eat healthy food choices in moderation, as prescribed by your doctor, dietician or other health care provider, particularly avoiding high sugar and fat content foods such as desserts and snacks
2. Attend diabetic education classes

3. Monitor your blood glucose as prescribed, and keep a record for your health care provider to review at each appointment
4. Use oral hypoglycemic medications or insulin exactly as prescribed.
5. Keep your appointments for periodic blood testing for Hemoglobin A-1C, as it is the best way to monitor your blood glucose control over time
6. Have your eyes checked as often as recommended by your medical doctor, or at least every year
7. Pay careful attention to the skin of your feet through regular close inspection, and protect them from cuts, scrapes or other injuries. Report any cuts or sores to your doctor if they do not heal promptly.