

# Focus on: Diabetes

## REFERENCE



**“An estimated 18.2 million people or 6.3 percent of the total population in the United States has diabetes. Of those people, 13 million have been diagnosed with diabetes and 5.2 million have not yet been diagnosed.”**

**—National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases**

### What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism, which is the way our bodies use digested food for growth and energy. Most of the food we eat is broken down into glucose after we have digested it. Glucose, also known as blood sugar, is used by cells for growth and energy.

However, in order for glucose to get into most of the body's cells, insulin must be present. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas, which is a large gland located behind the stomach. In people with diabetes, the pancreas produces little or no insulin, or the cells in the bloodstream do not properly respond to the insulin that is produced. Therefore, glucose builds up

in the blood and passes out of the body in the urine. So although the body contains a large amount of glucose, the body loses its main source of fuel because there isn't enough insulin to allow glucose to get into these cells.

### Types of Diabetes

**Type 1 Diabetes** – In type 1 diabetes, the pancreas produces little or no insulin, so a person with type 1 diabetes must take insulin daily in order to survive. About 5 to 10 percent of the diagnosed diabetes in the U.S. are type 1 diabetes. It develops most often in children and young adults but can appear at any age.

**Type 2 Diabetes** – About 90 to 95 percent of the people with diabetes have type 2 diabetes, making it the most common form of diabetes. Of these people who have type 2 diabetes, about 80 percent are overweight. This form of diabetes is associated with older age, obesity, physical inactivity, family history of diabetes, previous history of gestational diabetes and ethnicity. However, type 2 diabetes is increasingly being diagnosed in children and adolescents. When type 2 diabetes is diagnosed, the pancreas is usually producing enough insulin, but for unknown reasons, the body cannot use this insulin effectively. After several years, insulin production decreases and glucose builds up in the blood, which prevents the body from making use of its main source of fuel. Symptoms of type 2 diabetes develop gradually and may include:

- > Fatigue
- > Nausea
- > Frequent urination
- > Unusual thirst
- > Frequent infections
- > Blurred vision
- > Slow healing of wounds or sores
- > Weight loss



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However, some people may not experience any of these symptoms and still develop type 2 diabetes.

**Gestational Diabetes** – Gestational diabetes develops only during pregnancy and occurs more often in women who have a family history of diabetes. Women who have had gestational diabetes have a 20 to 50 percent chance of developing type 2 diabetes within 5 to 10 years.

## The Effects of Diabetes

Diabetes is widely recognized as one of the leading causes of death and disability in the U.S. In 2000, diabetes was the sixth leading cause of death, and the number of diabetes cases is expected to increase to 8.9 percent of the population by 2025. However, diabetes is under reported as a factor that leads to the cause of death. About 65 percent of the deaths among those with diabetes are attributed to stroke and heart disease.

Diabetes is often associated with long-term complications that affect almost every part of the body. For example, diabetes can lead to blindness, heart and vessel disease, stroke, kidney failure, amputations and nerve damage. Uncontrolled diabetes can complicate pregnancy, and birth defects are more frequent in babies who are born to mothers with diabetes.

### TIPS



## Prevention and Treatment

Healthy eating, physical activity and blood glucose testing are the basic management tools for both type 1 and 2 diabetes. Studies suggest that increased physical activity and weight loss can help people prevent or delay diabetes. People who have diabetes need to be responsible for the daily care of their body. This includes monitoring blood glucose levels to make sure they do not get too low or high. People with diabetes should also see a health care provider who can help them learn to manage their diabetes and to monitor how well they are able to control their diabetes. The goal of diabetes management is to keep the blood glucose levels as close to the normal range as safely possible, which helps to reduce the risk of developing the major complications caused by type 1 diabetes.

Advances in diabetes research in recent years have led to better ways of managing diabetes and treating its complications. Some of these advances include the

development of quick-acting insulin that can last for longer periods of time and improved ways to monitor blood glucose, through self-monitoring and less painful techniques.

**“Advances in diabetes research in recent years have led to better ways of managing diabetes and treating its complications.”**

Please consult your physician if you feel that you might be at risk for developing diabetes.

**For more information about diabetes, visit the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse at: <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov>.**

**For more information about Nationwide Better Health visit [nwbetterhealth.com](http://nwbetterhealth.com). Or contact your benefits representative.**



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