

Diabetes

Nearly 26 million people in the U.S. have diabetes. This includes men, women and children. But nearly one in four people do not know they have the illness.¹ Diabetes is not like some other health problems. Unlike a cold or the flu, it does not go away. It lasts your whole life and must be managed closely. Working with your doctor is key. You must be sure to plan your meals, stay active and take medicine if needed.

The cause of diabetes is still unknown. But it can be diagnosed early through simple tests that measure the level of sugar in your blood. This is the best way to find out if you have the illness so you can start treating it.

What is diabetes?

When you eat, your body turns food into sugar. The sugar is what gives you energy. The body uses insulin to get the sugar from the blood to the rest of the body. When you have diabetes, your body does not make enough insulin or does not use it properly. That means the sugar builds up in your blood instead of entering the cells. As a result, your body does not get the energy it needs.



Too much sugar in your blood can damage your blood vessels, nerves and other body organs. Over a long period, this may cause serious problems.

Types of diabetes

Type 1 diabetes:² Your body makes little or no insulin. People with this type of the disease must take insulin shots. This type of diabetes is called insulin-dependent diabetes. Only about one in 10 cases of diabetes is type 1.

If you have type 1 diabetes, these signs may appear suddenly:

- Increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Feeling very tired
- Increased urination
- Sudden weight loss

Type 2 diabetes:³ Your body makes insulin, but it cannot use it the right way. This is called insulin resistance. People who have this type of the illness can be treated with proper meal planning, exercise and medicine. Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of the disease. It occurs in nine of 10 cases.

If you have type 2 diabetes, these signs may appear slowly over time:

- Feeling tired
- Getting a lot of infections
- Blurry vision
- Slow healing of cuts or sores
- Numbness or tingling in hands or feet
- Dry, itchy skin
- Having to urinate more
- Problems with sexual function
- Increased hunger and thirst

Pre-diabetes: This is when blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be called diabetes.

Gestational diabetes:⁴ This condition occurs in pregnant women who have too much sugar in their blood. High blood sugar levels are unhealthy for both the mother and the baby. Untreated gestational diabetes could lead to a larger birth weight for the baby, and puts the mother at risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

Children and diabetes

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in people under the age of 20. Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes can be diagnosed in childhood.⁵ All groups of people

can develop type 2 diabetes, but non-white children and adolescents who are obese and have a family history of type 2 diabetes are at higher risk. Although type 2 diabetes is partly genetic, it may be prevented or delayed in some cases by living a healthy lifestyle.⁶ Learn more in the Children's Health section of this book.

Control diabetes before it controls you⁷

There are some long-term problems with diabetes related to high blood sugar (glucose) levels. Keeping your blood sugar as close to normal as possible may help lower your chances for developing the following:

- Eye problems
- Kidney disease
- Nerve damage
- Heart disease or stroke
- Frequent infections

The good news is that controlling your blood sugar may help lower your risk of developing diabetes complications. Knowing about the complications and taking positive steps is just one way to reduce your risk of developing them.

Eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly and working with your health care provider may also help reduce your risk of diabetes complications.

Could you have diabetes and not know it?⁸

Take the test.* Know your score.

Take this test from the American Diabetes Association to see if you are at risk for having diabetes. Write in the points next to each statement that is true for you. If a statement is not true, put a zero. Then add your total score.

1. I am a woman who has had a baby weighing more than nine pounds at birth. **Yes 1** _____
2. I have a sister or brother with diabetes. **Yes 1** _____
3. I have a parent with diabetes. **Yes 1** _____
4. My weight is equal to or above that listed in the chart on the next page. **Yes 5** _____
5. I am younger than 65 and get little or no exercise. **Yes 5** _____
6. I am between 45 and 64 years of age. **Yes 5** _____
7. I am 65 years old or older. **Yes 9** _____

Total _____

See what your score means on the next page.

*Diabetes is more common in African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders. If you are a member of one of these ethnic groups, you need to pay special attention to this test.

Scoring 10 or more points

You are at high risk for having diabetes. Only your health care provider can check to see if you have diabetes. Schedule a visit soon to find out for sure.

Scoring 0–9 points

You are currently at low risk for having diabetes. But don't forget about ways to prevent the disease. Keep your risk low by losing weight if you are overweight, be physically active most days and eat low-fat meals that are high in fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods.

At-risk weight chart⁹

Height	Weight
in feet and inches without shoes	in pounds without clothing
4' 10"	129
4' 11"	133
5' 0"	138
5' 1"	143
5' 2"	147
5' 3"	152
5' 4"	157
5' 5"	162
5' 6"	167
5' 7"	172
5' 8"	177
5' 9"	182
5' 10"	188
5' 11"	193
6' 0"	199
6' 1"	204
6' 2"	210
6' 3"	216
6' 4"	221

If you weigh the same as or more than the amount listed for your height, you may be at risk for diabetes.

Find Out More



American Association of Clinical
Endocrinologists
www.aace.com

American Association of Diabetes
Educators
www.diabeteseducator.org

American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org

Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
www.cdc.gov/diabetes

Eli Lilly and Company
www.lillydiabetes.com

Juvenile Diabetes Research
Foundation International
www.jdrf.org

National Diabetes Education
Program
www.ndep.nih.gov

National Diabetes Information
Clearinghouse
www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

Partnership to Fight Chronic
Disease
www.fightchronicdisease.org