

DIABETES

Diabetes is the name given to a group of different conditions in which there is too much glucose in the blood. It is a chronic disease, which means that it lasts for a long time, often for someone's whole life. Every day, around 280 Australians develop diabetes - that's equal to one person every 5 minutes. Around 1.7 million Australians have diabetes and all types of diabetes are increasing in prevalence, making it the fastest growing chronic condition in Australia.



WHAT IS DIABETES?



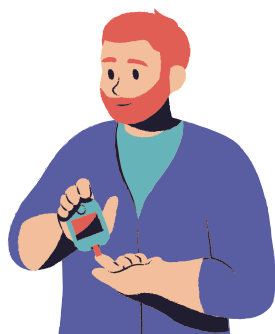
For our bodies to work properly we need to convert glucose (sugar) from the food we eat into energy. Glucose is the main source of energy for the body and comes from foods containing carbohydrates, such as all grains, breads, pasta, rice, cereals, fruits, starchy vegetables and dairy products. It also comes from processed foods that are high in sugars. The body breaks carbohydrate foods down to glucose which then enters the blood stream. For glucose to enter the cells to be used for energy, a hormone called insulin must be available. Insulin is produced by special cells called beta cells which are found in the pancreas. Diabetes occurs when the body either does not make insulin or the insulin that is produced by the pancreas is not working properly. This leads to increased blood glucose levels which can lead to the development of diabetes. The main types of diabetes are type 1, type 2, gestational diabetes and a condition called pre-diabetes.

TYPE 1 DIABETES

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease where the beta cells in the pancreas are destroyed and can no longer produce insulin to transport the glucose from the blood into the cells of the body for energy. This causes the blood glucose levels to rise dramatically. People who develop type 1 diabetes will usually seek medical advice quickly as they can become seriously ill from the onset of this condition. Although the cause of type 1 diabetes is unknown and it cannot be prevented, it is managed through daily insulin injections. Type 1 diabetes accounts for 10–15% of all cases of diagnosed diabetes.

Symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes:

- Excessive thirst
- Frequent urination
- Feeling tired and lethargic
- Slow healing wounds
- Always feeling hungry
- Unexplained weight loss
- Mood swings, headaches
- Feeling dizzy



Pre-Diabetes

Pre-diabetes describes a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal, although not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. There are no signs or symptoms for pre-diabetes and people with this condition are at greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Two million Australians currently have pre-diabetes and therefore are at high risk of type 2 diabetes. Without sustained lifestyle changes including healthy eating, increased activity and losing weight, approximately one in three people with pre-diabetes will go on to develop type 2 diabetes.

Risk factors for Pre-Diabetes:

- Family history of diabetes
- Being overweight
- Carrying excess weight around the waist
- Physical inactivity
- Low HDL (good) cholesterol and/or a high total
- High blood pressure
- Women with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome
- Previously having gestational diabetes
- Being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background

Prevention of Pre-Diabetes

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise regularly



Symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes:

- Excessive thirst
- Frequent urination
- Feeling tired and lethargic
- Slow healing wounds
- Always feeling hungry
- Unexplained weight loss
- Mood swings, headaches
- Feeling dizzy

This includes:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Regular physical activity
- Making healthy food choices
- Managing blood pressure
- Managing cholesterol levels
- Not smoking

Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes that occurs during pregnancy and usually goes away after the baby is born. It is diagnosed when higher than normal blood glucose levels first appear during pregnancy. Gestational diabetes is becoming more common in Australia, affecting thousands of pregnant women. Between 5% and 10% of pregnant women will develop this condition and this usually occurs around the 24th to 28th week of pregnancy. A healthy lifestyle is important for both mother and baby to reduce their risk of diabetes in the future.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes, affecting 85-90% of all people with diabetes. It used to be known as adult or late-onset diabetes, however an increasing number of younger adults and even children are now developing the condition. It is diagnosed when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin and/or the insulin does not work effectively and/or the cells of the body do not respond to insulin effectively (known as insulin resistance). Genetics, family history, environmental and lifestyle factors all play a role in the risk of type 2 diabetes. There is currently no cure for type 2 diabetes, although it can often be managed by making healthy lifestyle choices. However, over time most people with type 2 diabetes may also need tablets and many will also need insulin.

Risk factors for Type 2 Diabetes:

While there is no single cause of type 2 diabetes, there are well-established risk factors. Some of these can be changed and some cannot.

You are at a higher risk of type 2 diabetes if you:

- Have a family history of diabetes.
- Are over 55 years old.
- Are over 45, overweight and have high blood pressure.
- Are over 35 and of Indigenous or ethnic backgrounds.
- Are a female who has given birth to a child weighing >4.5kg, or had gestational diabetes.
- Have pre-diabetes.
- Are overweight or obese.
- Engage in low levels of physical activity, including watching TV for >2hrs per day.
- Have a poor diet high in processed fats, sugars and low fibre foods.
- Smoke cigarettes and/or drink alcohol excessively.

Preventing Type 2 Diabetes:

It is estimated that up to 60% of type 2 diabetes can be prevented or reversed. People at risk of type 2 diabetes can delay and even prevent this disease by following a healthy lifestyle.



Common Consequences of Diabetes

Over time, diabetes can damage the heart, blood vessels, kidneys, eyes and nerves. It also increases the risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease, and damaged nerves can lead to foot ulcers, infection and the eventual need for limb amputation. Blindness, kidney failure and risk of early death are all increased amongst people with diabetes.

“Simple healthy lifestyle measures have been shown to be effective at preventing or delaying the onset of diabetes.”

For more information on diabetes:
www.diabetesaustralia.com.au or www.diabetessa.com.au



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