

Ask *the* Expert *Diabetes 101*

Diabetes is quickly becoming an epidemic in the United States. Every 17 seconds, someone is diagnosed with diabetes. It is one of the leading causes of disability and death in the United States.

What is Diabetes? What is the difference between Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose levels are above normal. When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't use its own insulin as well as it should. Instead of being used by your body, the glucose builds up in your blood and the rest of your body is starved of energy.

Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and young adults, and was previously known as juvenile diabetes. Approximately 5% of people with diabetes have this form of the disease. With the help of insulin therapy and other treatments, even young children can learn to manage their condition and live long, healthy lives.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes and accounts for approximately 90-95% of diagnosed diabetes cases. People who are overweight are more likely to get type 2 diabetes.

Gestational diabetes is 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.

How can I prevent or delay Type 2 Diabetes?

Type 2 Diabetes can be prevented or delayed by living a healthy lifestyle, including maintaining a healthy weight, a nutritional diet, and consistent physical activity.

Changes to diet and exercise do not have to be made overnight. Taking small steps each day/week/month will eventually lead to the big picture: a long, healthy life. Becoming more conscious of the health decisions you make every day can be extremely beneficial to improving your health. Seemingly small efforts such as portion control, tracking what you eat with a food diary and taking the stairs instead of the elevator will make a huge impact on your health.

Why is important to avoid/control Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease. In addition to the direct potentially negative effects on your body, if not controlled it is also a gateway to many other serious health risks and problems. A few of these are: problems in the eyes, including blindness, kidney disease, heart disease, stroke, hypertension and more.

The important thing to remember about type 2 Diabetes is that it is possible to prevent or at least prolong a diagnosis by being aware of your risks, paying attention to your body and making the effort to live a healthy lifestyle.

Are there certain risks and signs I should know?

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include older age (45+), obesity, family history, gestational diabetes, impaired glucose tolerance, and race/ethnicity. African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at particularly high risk for type 2 diabetes. Other factors may include high blood pressure and/or cholesterol and lack of physical activity.

Risk factors are less well defined for type 1 diabetes than for type 2 diabetes, but autoimmune, genetic, and environmental factors are all involved in developing this type of diabetes.

Patients may first be diagnosed with pre-diabetes, which means the amount of glucose in the blood is higher than normal. If you have pre-diabetes, you are at risk for serious health problems, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

Until they are diagnosed by a physician, many people with diabetes don't know they have the disease. Some signs of

diabetes may include extreme thirst or hunger, feeling tired for no reason, frequent urination, unusual weight loss, slower healing of cuts/bruises, blurry vision, tingling or loss of feeling in hands and/or feet.

It is possible you will have some of these symptoms, but you may not have any symptoms at all. It is important to schedule annual wellness exams with your primary care physician in order to discuss family history, risks of particular diseases and any warnings signs.

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with diabetes, we offer several programs that could be beneficial. Our diabetes support group, open to anyone with diabetes, meets the 3rd Thursday of every month. A light lunch is served and a guest speaker discusses hot topics relating to diabetes. For more information call 870-936-8020.

Wellness Works!, a program of NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation, is a free program that offers assistance to those who have been diagnosed with a chronic illness, such as diabetes. Ask your doctor for a referral or call 870-336-1770 for more information.

Sources: healthfinder.gov
cdc.gov
diabetes.org



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