

Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease in which your body cannot properly use the food you eat for energy. Your cells need energy to live and grow.

When you eat, food breaks down into a form of energy called glucose. Glucose is another word for sugar. The glucose goes into your blood and your blood sugar rises. Insulin is a hormone made by your pancreas. It helps glucose move from your blood into your cells so your body can use it for energy. People cannot live without insulin.

There are three main types of diabetes.

- In Type 1 diabetes, the pancreas makes no insulin.
- In Type 2 diabetes, the pancreas does not make enough insulin or your body is not able to use the insulin the pancreas makes.
- In gestational diabetes during pregnancy, the mother is not able to make enough insulin to cover the needs of both mother and baby.

Risk Factors for Diabetes

You are more at risk for getting diabetes if you:

- Are from a family where others have diabetes
- Are overweight
- Are over age 40
- Are inactive
- Had diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) or a baby weighing 9 pounds or 4 kilograms or more at birth
- Are of African, Asian, Latino or Pacific Islander decent

Signs of Diabetes

- Very thirsty
- Feeling tired
- Use the toilet often to urinate
- Blurred vision
- Weight loss
- Wounds are slow to heal
- Constant hunger
- Itchy skin

- Infections
- Numbness or tingling in feet and/or hands
- Problems with sexual activity

Often people have no signs even though their blood glucose level is high. You can be checked for diabetes with a blood test.

Your Care

The goal is to keep your glucose level as near to normal as possible. Your care may include:

- Planning meals
- Testing glucose levels
- Learning signs to know when your glucose level is too low or too high
- Exercising
- Taking medicine - insulin or pills
- Keeping all appointments with your health care team
- Attending diabetes classes

Talk to your doctor, nurse and dietitian to learn how to manage your diabetes.