

LIVING WITH DIABETES

What is Diabetes?

In people with diabetes, blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are too high. These high levels occur because glucose remains in the blood rather than entering cells, where it belongs. For glucose to pass into a cell, insulin must be present. Insulin is a hormone needed to convert food into energy for essential body function. There are two types of diabetes:

Insulin Dependent (IDDM): Usually diagnosed in children and young adults. The body does not produce insulin. Only 5% of people with diabetes have this form.

Non-Insulin Dependent (NIDDM): Most common form of diabetes. The body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin that is produced. When glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into the cells, it can lead to diabetes complications.

U. S. Statistics:

- Total prevalence of diabetes: 25.8 million children and adults (8.3% of the population)
- Diagnosed: 18.8 million Americans
- Undiagnosed: 7 million Americans
- 10.9 million or 26.9% of all people age 65 and older have diabetes
- Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, non-traumatic lower limb amputations, and blindness.
- The risk for heart disease & stroke is greater among those with diabetes

Risk Factors

- Over 45 years of age
- Family history of diabetes
- Overweight/Obesity
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Impaired glucose tolerance/ fasting glucose
- Low HDL (good) cholesterol
- High triglycerides
- High blood pressure
- Most prevalent in African American, Latino, & Native American populations



Symptoms: Insulin Dependent

- Frequent urination
- Unusual thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Unusual weight loss
- Extreme fatigue & irritability

Symptoms: Non-insulin Dependent

- Any of Insulin Dependent symptoms
- Blurred vision
- Cuts & bruises that are slow to heal
- Tingling & numbness in hands & feet
- Recurrent skin, gum, or bladder infections

Prevention:

Maintain healthy weight

- Statistics show if you lose 5-10% of your body weight the likelihood of developing diabetes decreases by 50%

Increase level of physical activity

- The recommended amount of physical activity for ages 65 and older is at least 30 minutes 3-5x a week

Change your diet

- Increasing your daily intake of fiber and whole grains helps balance your blood sugar



Tips:

Inspect your feet daily for areas of redness, blistering, & soreness. Using a mirror or asking a family member to assist is helpful for adequate inspections.

Check your blood glucose regularly. Write down your results to see how food, activity, and stress affect your levels.

Always discuss concerns with your physician, especially medications you are taking and how they may affect diabetes.

Treatment:

- Insulin is required for people with IDDM and sometimes necessary for people with NIDDM.
- Using a syringe for insulin delivery is the most common form, but insulin pens and pumps are available.
- Insulin should be injected in the same area of the body for consistency, and should be timed with meals to effectively process the glucose entering your system.
- More than 20 types of insulin exist in the U.S. These differ in how they are made, how they work in the body, and how much they cost. Your physician can help you find the right type of insulin for your lifestyle.
- The first treatment for NIDDM diabetes blood glucose control is often meal planning, weight loss, and exercising. If these measures are not enough to lower blood glucose levels, oral medication is the next step.

References:

American Diabetes Association
<http://www.diabetes.org>
Mayo Clinic
<http://www.mayoclinic.com>

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