

Diabetes

With diabetes, the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into the energy needed to live. About 25.8 million people in the United States are affected by diabetes — more than 8 percent of the population — according to the 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet. Of these, about 7 million are undiagnosed. Diabetes is a leading cause of death and is a major cause of kidney failure, non-traumatic lower limb amputations, heart disease, stroke, and new cases of blindness.

Type 1 diabetes

This illness most often is diagnosed in children and young adults, but it can occur at any age. The bodies of those with type 1 diabetes do not produce insulin. Only 5 percent of those with diabetes have type 1 diabetes.

Risk factors

- Family history of type 1 diabetes
- The presence of certain genes
- Geography may play a role. Studies indicate the incidence of diabetes decreases as you get farther from the equator.

Other possible risk factors include exposure to certain viruses, early exposure to vitamin D, and other dietary factors.

Type 2 diabetes

This is a chronic condition that affects how your body metabolizes sugar. People with type 2 diabetes do not use insulin properly

or do not produce enough insulin. This prevents the body from metabolizing sugar properly and maintaining a normal blood glucose level.

Risk factors

- Being overweight. A fat distribution primarily in the abdomen instead of the hips, thighs or other areas also may increase your risk.
- Physical inactivity
- Family history of diabetes
- Race. Risk of developing diabetes is higher among African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans.
- Age. Risk of developing diabetes increases as you age, particularly after age 45.
- Prediabetes. This condition in which a person's blood sugar is higher than normal but not high enough to be classified as diabetes can progress to diabetes if left untreated.
- History of gestational diabetes or having given birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds

Symptoms

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Extreme hunger
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme fatigue
- Blurred vision
- High blood pressure
- Sores that heal slowly
- Frequent infections
- Tingling, pain or numbness in the hands or feet

Complications

It is important for diabetes to be diagnosed early and for those with the condition to properly control it. Failing to do so can lead to a number of possible complications.

- Cardiovascular disease, including coronary artery disease, heart attack, stroke and atherosclerosis
- Nerve damage
- Kidney damage, including kidney disease and kidney failure
- Eye damage, including blindness, cataracts and glaucoma
- Foot problems
- Osteoporosis
- Skin conditions

Treatment and care

Millions of people live active, happy lives while successfully managing their diabetes. The following tips may help:

- Learn as much about the condition as possible
- Communicate well with your physician and other health care providers
- Monitor your blood glucose properly
- Consult with your doctor and begin an exercise program
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
- Take all medications as directed by your physician

For more information, contact your physician.

Source: www.diabetes.org, www.cdc.gov and www.mayoclinic.com