Get control over your diabetes

What is diabetes?

People who have diabetes have blood glucose (or sugar) levels that are above normal. Most of the food you eat is turned into sugar for your body to use for energy. Your body needs insulin, which is made by the pancreas, to help sugar get into your body's cells. When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make the right amount of insulin or can't use its own insulin as well as it should. This causes sugar to build up in your blood.

What are the signs?

If you think you have diabetes, you should see your doctor right away. Some of these things may be happening to you:

- Passing urine more than normal
- Extreme thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme hunger
- Sudden eyesight changes
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Feeling very tired much of the time
- Very dry skin
- Sores that are slow to heal
- More infections than normal
What are the types?

The three most common types of the illness are:

- **Type 1.** In Type 1, the body's immune system attacks the cells that make insulin. As a result, the pancreas makes little or no insulin. People with Type 1 must take insulin daily to survive. There is no known way of stopping the onset of the disease.

- **Type 2.** In Type 2, the pancreas doesn't make enough insulin or the body's cells don't use insulin properly. As glucose builds up in the bloodstream and the body's need for insulin increases, insulin is not made as much. Although Type 2 is linked to such things as inactivity, obesity and older age, more children and adolescents are being diagnosed with it.

- **Gestational diabetes.** This is a type only pregnant women get. Out of every 50 pregnancies, between one and five women get it. As a rule, it goes away when their baby is born. If it isn't treated, though, it can cause problems for moms and babies.

What is the treatment?

There is no known cure for diabetes, but it can be helped with medicine and doing things that are healthy.

People with Type 1 can control it by taking insulin, eating healthy and being active. Those with Type 2 can help their symptoms by eating healthy, exercising and regular blood glucose testing. In both cases, self-care is important. This means keeping tabs on your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Healthy habits every day also helps. Preventive care – like regular eye exams and other medical checkups – can help keep your diabetes from getting worse.

What are the causes?

The reasons for Type 1 are not as clear. Studies show it could be passed on to you from a family member. Also, it may be caused by a viral infection.

Some reasons why people get Type 2 include older age, obesity, family history, history of gestational diabetes when pregnant, low sugar tolerance, physical inactivity and race.

Gestational diabetes happens more often in African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians and people with a family history of diabetes than in other groups. Obesity also plays a part in the chance of getting this type of diabetes. And women who have had diabetes while pregnant have more than a one in three chances of getting diabetes in the next 10 to 20 years.

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