

Diabetes



What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which the body cannot make proper use of carbohydrate in food. This happens if the pancreas does not make enough insulin or the insulin produced is ineffective, or a combination of both.

Insulin helps glucose (sugar) from the digestion of carbohydrate in food, move into the body's cells where it is used for energy. When insulin is not present or is ineffective, glucose builds up in the blood.

The two most common forms of diabetes are:

Type 1

In type 1 diabetes the pancreas produces no insulin, usually because the cells which make it have been destroyed by the immune system. People with type 1 diabetes therefore require insulin injections to control their blood glucose levels. It accounts for 15% of all people with diabetes.

This type of diabetes usually occurs in people under 30 years but can occur at any age.

Type 2

In type 2 diabetes, the body often produces enough insulin but it is ineffective. In some situations, less insulin may be produced over time. It accounts for 85% of people with diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is managed by a healthy eating plan, regular exercise, weight reduction, and, when needed, oral medication and insulin.



In type 1 diabetes, symptoms are often sudden and can be life-threatening. In type 2 diabetes, many people have no symptoms at all, while other signs can go unnoticed.

Common symptoms include:

- Extreme thirst
- Frequent urination
- Feeling tired and lethargic
- Constant hunger
- Having cuts that heal slowly
- Blurred vision
- Unexplained weight loss (type 1)
- Gradually putting on weight (type 2)
- Headaches
- Feeling dizzy
- Itchy rashes and skin discolouration.

What are the complications of diabetes?

People with diabetes can be at risk of developing severe complications such as:

- Kidney failure
- Blindness
- Nerve damage to the feet and other parts of the body
- Heart disease (for example, angina or heart attacks), strokes and circulation problems in the legs
- Amputation.

How is diabetes diagnosed?

Most people with type 1 diabetes and many with type 2 diabetes will present with symptoms. However, the main diagnostic tool for confirming diabetes is taking a blood test to measure glucose, such as a random or fasting blood glucose test, or an oral glucose tolerance test (type 2).

What is the treatment of diabetes?

There is no cure for diabetes, but the condition can be managed. Treatment depends on the type of diabetes but the general aim is to control blood sugar levels and keep them within the normal range. Treatment options may include:

- Insulin injections (type 1)
- Medications and (potentially) insulin at a later stage (type 2)
- A balanced, healthy diet
- Monitoring blood glucose
- Physical activity
- Smoking cessation
- Having regular checkups and screening tests.

For further information, please
speak with your doctor or contact:

Australian Diabetes Educators Association
www.adea.com.au

Carers Australia
www.carers.com.au

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres
Ph.: 1800 242 636 (free call)

Diabetes Australia
www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF)
www.jdrf.org.au

Reality Check
www.realitycheck.org.au

American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org

Canadian Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.ca

Diabetes New Zealand
www.diabetes.org.nz

Diabetes Self-Management
www.diabetesselfmanagement.com

Diabetes United Kingdom
www.diabetes.org.uk

International Diabetes Institute
www.idf.org



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