

# Control your diabetes *For Life.*

Circular 569 A

## What is Diabetes?

Diabetes occurs when the body is not able to properly use energy from food.

There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes.

Most people who have diabetes have type 2 diabetes.

Women who have had gestational diabetes are at risk for type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes can be controlled, but it cannot be cured.

Diabetes complications are caused by high blood glucose levels.

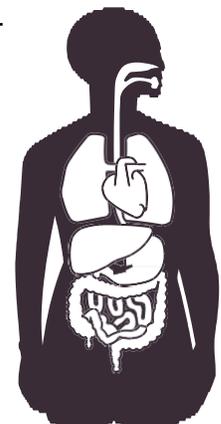
Diabetes complications can be prevented.

**Diabetes** is a disease that occurs when the body is not able to properly use energy from food. The body needs **glucose** for growth and energy. Glucose is a kind of sugar we get from many of the foods we eat and is absorbed into the blood through the digestive system. Once in the blood, glucose needs to move into cells where it can be used for energy. A hormone called **insulin** acts like a key to open doors to cells, allowing glucose to enter. Diabetes occurs when either the **pancreas** doesn't make enough insulin, or the body isn't using insulin effectively. As a result, glucose stays in the blood. Over time, too much glucose in the blood can cause damage to tissues and result in diabetes complications, such as amputations, blindness, kidney disease, heart disease, and nerve and blood vessel damage.

### Types of Diabetes

**Type 1 diabetes** occurs when the pancreas can no longer make insulin. Type 1 usually comes on abruptly and generally occurs in children and adults who are under age 30. Since the body is not capable of making insulin, people with type 1 diabetes need to take daily injections of insulin to stay alive. The causes of type 1 diabetes are not known. Scientists think that type 1 may have many causes: hereditary causes (when someone has parents or other family members with the disease) and causes both inside and outside the body, including viruses.

**Type 2 diabetes**, the most common form, affects about 90 to 95 percent of the people who have diabetes and seems to be related to being overweight and an inactive



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lifestyle. Type 2 diabetes seems to have a strong hereditary link. Unlike type 1 diabetes, people with type 2 make some insulin, sometimes even too much, but their body doesn't use the insulin properly. Others, may not make enough insulin or their cells don't recognize the insulin.

Some people are able to control their blood glucose levels simply by making lifestyle changes: **eating a balanced, healthy diet** and **increasing their physical activity**. Other people with type 2 diabetes may also need to take **medicines**. These medicines can be pills, which lower blood glucose levels or improve insulin action; insulin injections; or a combination of the two. Type 2 diabetes usually develops over a long period of time and can develop at any age. In the past, type 2 mainly affected older people. However, today we are seeing type 2 much more often in younger age groups, including children.

**Gestational diabetes** begins during pregnancy and disappears after delivery. Women who are overweight, have a family history of diabetes, have given birth to a very large baby, or who are older than 25 are at increased risk of developing gestational diabetes. The **American Diabetes Association** recommends screening for gestational diabetes in all pregnant women. This screening is usually performed at the end of the second trimester or beginning of the third trimester.

### Diabetes Complications

Health problems caused by uncontrolled diabetes—blindness, kidney disease, amputations, and heart disease—can be prevented. The key to preventing complications is to keep blood glucose levels as close to “normal” as possible. Eating a healthy diet, getting daily physical activity, taking medicines as prescribed, and seeing your health care provider regularly can keep diabetes under control.

Diabetes can be controlled—diabetes complications can be prevented!

## Where to Go for More Information

Your health care provider

American Diabetes Association:  
**1-800-DIABETES**

National Diabetes Education Program:  
**1-800-438-5383** or  
visit the World Wide Web  
at **ndep.nih.gov** or  
**www.cdc.gov**

Your county  
Extension office

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