

WHAT IS DIABETES?



Diabetes is a disorder of your metabolism. Metabolism is the way your body uses digested food for energy and growth. Normally, your digestive system converts a portion of the food you eat into a sugar called glucose.

In order for the cells in your body to receive the glucose and use it for fuel, it needs insulin. Insulin is a hormone produced by your pancreas.

Who gets diabetes?

Anyone can get diabetes. It can occur in all stages of life and in people of all shapes, sizes and backgrounds. Recent estimates from the National Institutes of Health put the number of Americans with diabetes at over 18 million. This number includes 5 million people who don't know they have the disease.

In order to tell whether or not you have pre-diabetes or diabetes, your doctor must perform a fasting plasma glucose test (FPG) or an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT). The American Diabetes Association recommends the FPG because it is faster, easier, and less expensive to perform.

With the FPG test, a fasting blood glucose level between 100 and 125 mg/dl signals pre-diabetes. A person with a fasting blood glucose level of 126 mg/dl or higher has diabetes.

What are the types of diabetes?

There are three (3) basic types of diabetes-Type 1, Type 2, and Gestational.

Type 1 Diabetes: 5 to 10% of all people with diabetes in the U.S. have Type 1. This type of diabetes develops most often in children and young adults and is most common in Caucasians. In Type 1 Diabetes, your pancreas produces reduced amounts of insulin.

Type 2 Diabetes: This type results from insulin resistance which is a condition where the body fails to properly use insulin combined with an insulin deficiency. Most people who have diabetes have this type.

Gestational Diabetes: This type of diabetes affects pregnant women. About 4% of all pregnant women are affected.

What is Pre-Diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is a condition that occurs when your blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough for a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes. There are 41 million Americans who have pre-diabetes.

What are the symptoms of diabetes?

The symptoms of diabetes include:

- Extreme thirst
- Continuous need to urinate, sometimes every hour
- Fatigue and weakness
- Increased appetite
- Weight loss
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Blurred vision
- Hard to heal infections of the skin, gums, or bladder
- Tingling or loss of feeling in the hands or feet
- Dry, itchy skin

The symptoms of diabetes can be very mild. Sometimes people mistake them for signs of growing older.

What are the complications of diabetes?

Having type 1 or type 2 diabetes puts you at risk for many serious complications. They include:

- Heart disease
- Blindness
- Nerve damage
- Kidney damage

Having diabetes is scary. However, with proper treatment and compliance, you can live a long, healthy life.

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