



# Health & Wellness

## November is Type 2 Diabetes Awareness Month

*Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes. It is a lifelong (chronic) disease in which there are high levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood.*

*Diabetes involves serious impacts to an individual's health and lifestyle. Read this newsletter to learn about type 2 diabetes.*



Source: PubMed Health

Diabetes is caused by a problem in the way your body makes or uses insulin. Insulin is needed to move blood sugar (glucose) into cells, where it is stored and later used for energy.

When you have type 2 diabetes, your fat, liver and muscle cells do not respond correctly to insulin. This is called insulin resistance. As a result, blood sugar does not get into these cells to be stored for energy. When sugar cannot enter cells, high levels of sugar build up in the blood. This is called hyperglycemia.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Type 2 diabetes usually occurs slowly over time. Most people with the disease are overweight when they are diagnosed. Increased fat makes it harder for your body to use insulin the correct way.

Type 2 diabetes can also develop in people who are thin. This is more common in the elderly.

Family history and genes play a large role in type 2 diabetes. Low activity levels, poor diet and excess body weight around the waist increase your risk.

### SYMPTOMS

Often, people with type 2 diabetes have no symptoms at first. They may not have symptoms for many years.

The early symptoms of diabetes may include:

- Bladder, kidney, skin or other infections that are more frequent or heal slowly
- Fatigue
- Hunger
- Increased thirst
- Increased urination

The first symptom may also be:

- Blurred vision
- Erectile dysfunction
- Pain or numbness in the feet or hands

### EXERCISE

Regular exercise is important for everyone. It is even more important you have diabetes. Exercising so your heart beats faster and you breathe faster helps lower your blood sugar level without medication. It also burns extra calories and fat so you can manage your weight.

Exercise can help your health by improving blood flow and blood pressure. Exercise also increases the body's energy level, lowers tension and improves your ability to handle stress.

Ask your healthcare provider before starting any exercise program.

Eating a healthy diet can also help to improve your overall health.

### EFFECTS IN THE BODY

People with diabetes are more likely to have foot problems. Diabetes can damage nerves, which means you may not feel an injury to the foot until you get a large sore or infection. Diabetes can also damage your blood vessels. To prevent injury to your feet, check and care for your feet every day.

Diabetes decreases the body's ability to fight infection. Small infections can quickly get worse and cause the death of skin and other tissues.

After many years, diabetes can lead to serious problems with your eyes, kidneys, nerves, heart, blood vessels or other areas in your body.



## EFFECTS IN THE HEART

If you have diabetes, your risk of a heart attack is the same as that of someone who has already had a heart attack. Both women and men with diabetes are at risk. You may not even have the normal signs of a heart attack.

If you control your blood sugar and blood pressure, you can reduce your risk of death, stroke, heart failure and other diabetes problems.

## LONG TERM EFFECTS

After many years, diabetes can lead to serious problems:

- You could have eye problems, including trouble seeing (especially at night) and light sensitivity. You could become blind.
- Your feet and skin can develop sores and infections. After a long time, your foot or leg may need to be removed. Infection can also cause pain and itching in other parts of the body.
- Diabetes may make it harder to control your blood pressure and cholesterol. This can lead to a heart attack, stroke and other problems. It can become harder for blood to flow to your legs and feet.
- Nerves in your body can get damaged, causing pain, tingling and a loss of feeling.
- Because of nerve damage, you could have problems digesting the food you eat. You could feel weakness or have trouble going to the bathroom. Nerve damage can make it harder for men to have an erection.
- High blood sugar and other problems can lead to kidney damage. Your kidneys may not work as well, and they may even stop working.
- Infections of the skin, female genital tract and urinary tract are also more common.

With the proper diet, weight and exercise, some people with type 2 diabetes can safely manage their diabetes without relying heavily on prescription medications.

## PREVENTION

To prevent problems from diabetes, visit your healthcare provider or diabetes educator at least four times a year. Talk about any problems or concerns you may have.

You can also contact your Health & Wellness Department if you need help finding a suitable doctor that will help you manage or prevent diabetes. Our doors are always open to discuss your questions or concerns.