

# What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when your body doesn't make or use the hormone insulin properly. It causes too much blood glucose (sugar) to build up in the blood. There are 2 main types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes occurs when your body doesn't produce any insulin. It is sometimes called juvenile diabetes because it is usually discovered in children and teenagers, but it may appear in adults, too. Type 2 diabetes occurs when your body doesn't produce enough insulin or doesn't use the insulin as it should. In the past, doctors thought that only adults were at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. However, an increasing number of children in the United States are now being diagnosed with the disease. Doctors think this increase is mostly because more children are overweight or obese and are less physically active.

Prediabetes occurs when blood sugar levels are higher than they should be, but not high enough to officially be diagnosed as diabetes. Pre-diabetes greatly increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The good news is that, if you have prediabetes, you can prevent or delay the onset of full-blown type 2 diabetes by making lifestyle changes. These include eating a healthy diet, reaching and maintaining a healthy weight, and exercising regularly.

## Symptoms of diabetes

Symptoms vary from person to person. The early stages of diabetes have very few symptoms. You may not know you have the disease. But damage may already be

happening to your eyes, your kidneys, and your cardiovascular system. Common symptoms include:

- Extreme hunger.
- Extreme thirst.
- Frequent urination.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Fatigue or drowsiness.
- Blurry vision.
- Slow-healing wounds, sores, or bruises.
- Dry, itchy skin.
- Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet

## What are some risk factors for type 2 diabetes?

- **Weight. Obesity** is the single most important risk factor for type 2 diabetes. The more overweight you are, the more resistant your body is to insulin. A healthy, low-fat diet and regular exercise can help you lose weight gradually and keep it off.
- **Age.** The risk for type 2 diabetes increases with age, especially after you're 45 years old. Although you can't change your age, you can work on other risk factors to reduce your risk.
- **Family history.** You can't change your family history, but it is still important for you and your doctor to know if diabetes runs in your family. Your risk for

diabetes is higher if your mother, father, or sibling has diabetes. Tell your doctor if anyone in your family has diabetes.

- **Cigarette smoking or Alcohol consumption.** If you smoke you want to quit right away. Daily consumption of Alcohol puts individuals in a higher risk bracket. A serving of alcohol is 4 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer or 1.5 ounces of any hard liquor.