

## If I have diabetes, what can I do?

- ✓ Take your insulin or pills as your doctor prescribed.
- ✓ Check your blood sugar levels as instructed.
- ✓ Get regular exercise.
- ✓ Lose weight. Overweight increase your risk of getting diabetes and complications from diabetes.
- ✓ Eat healthy and change what you eat. A dietician can help you plan meals that are low in fat, salt and sugar.
- ✓ Limit your alcohol intake.
- ✓ Stop smoking and don't vape. Besides raising your blood sugar level, smoking also damages your heart, blood vessels and kidneys.
- ✓ Have an eye exam once a year. Controlling your blood sugar level prevents damage to your eyes.
- ✓ Take care of your teeth. People with diabetes have a higher risk of holes and gum disease. Brush after every meal.
- ✓ Treat cuts and sores before infection starts.

## What can happen if diabetes is not treated or treated correctly?

Untreated or poorly controlled diabetes can damage your eyes, nerves, kidneys, heart, and cause impotence in men.

High blood sugar can cause poor vision and even blindness. High blood sugar slows healing of cuts and sores. It can increase vaginal and skin infections. It can damage blood vessels and nerves. This can lead to loss of fingers, toes and even amputation of arms and legs.

## What is Hypoglycaemia?

Hypoglycaemia is low blood sugar levels. Diabetic medication can drop blood sugar levels too low.

Unsafe low blood sugar is dangerous because you may pass out. Signs to watch out for are dizziness, irritability, poor concentration, weakness, and feeling shaky. You may also sweat, be sleepy, confused or hungry, or have trouble speaking. Seek help.

**Take care of your health, make the right choices today.**

*A Humor Diagnostica Community Service Initiative*



## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is an illness that affects the way our body uses food. Most of the food we eat changes into glucose or sugar. Blood glucose not only comes from the food we eat, the liver also makes glucose.

**Diabetes is high levels of sugar in the blood.**

Glucose collects in our blood. We call it blood sugar. Our body uses this sugar as energy or fuel. Our brain, heart and muscles use glucose to work correctly.

Our body needs to get the glucose from the blood into the cells to use it. The pancreas is an organ near the stomach that makes insulin. Insulin is like a key that opens the doors to the cells of the body. It helps glucose get into the body's cells.

When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or it can't use the insulin that it makes. This means that the glucose stays in your blood and doesn't get into the cells where needed. We call this high blood sugar or diabetes. Diabetes is high levels of sugar in the blood.

Lots of glucose in the blood makes people sick if they don't get treatment.

## Types of diabetes

There are two types of diabetes: Diabetes type 1 and type 2. Type 1 and type 2 diabetes have different causes, but both are high levels of blood sugar. Both have the same health risks if not treated.



**Type 1 diabetes is when the body can't make insulin. Type 1 diabetes often starts as a child or teenager. You can't prevent it. It is treated with insulin injections.**

## Type 1 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is when the pancreas can't make insulin. The medical term for this is insulin-dependent diabetes.

The body gets the glucose from food, but it can't get it into the cells to do its job. It stays in the blood. This makes the blood sugar level high causing health problems.

To fix the problem, someone with type 1 diabetes needs to take insulin through regular insulin injections.

Type 1 diabetes often starts as a child or teenager, but it can occur in older people. You can't prevent it.

## Type 2 diabetes

In type 2 diabetes, the pancreas makes insulin, but the insulin doesn't work in the body like it should and blood sugar levels get too high. Your body doesn't respond to the insulin. The medical term is insulin-resistant diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes can develop slowly. Sometimes type 2 diabetes runs in the family. Type 2 diabetes starts later in life, but many children now get it. Your lifestyle (what you eat or do) can cause it.

In type 2 diabetes you usually don't need insulin injections. Your doctor can prescribe medication (pills) for it and you have to make changes to your lifestyle.



**Type 2 diabetes is when the body makes insulin, but the insulin doesn't work as it should. It starts later in life. Diet and lifestyle have a large impact on it.**

## How is diabetes diagnosed?

The doctor or nurse will do a blood test. This measures the blood sugar level in your blood. You can have diabetes without any warning signs.



Normal blood sugar levels are between 4.0 and 5.9mmol/L before meals and it should be under 7.8mmol/L if measured 2 hours after eating.

## Some diabetes warning signs are:

- Wants to urinate (pee) often, especially at night. This is because the body tries to get rid of the extra blood sugar by passing it out of the body in the urine.
- Increased thirst or dry mouth. You need to drink a lot to make up for the fluid lost in urinating.
- Always feeling hungry and tired. People don't get enough energy from the food they eat.
- Blurry vision. High glucose blood levels can damage the tiny blood vessels in the eyes causing fuzzy vision. Unclear vision can occur in one or both of the eyes and may come and go. Over time it may result in permanent blindness.
- Slow healing of cuts and wounds. It can also bring pain or a tingling feeling or numbness (deadness) in the hands and feet. High blood glucose levels can damage the blood vessels and nerves. Over time it may result in the amputation of a hand, arm, leg, fingers or toes.
- Itching and increase in infections. High sugar in the blood and urine provides food for yeast, which can lead to infection. Yeast infections tend to occur on warm, moist areas of the skin, such as the mouth, genital areas and armpits. It results in burning, redness and soreness.

## Can diabetes be prevented?

Type 1 diabetes can't be prevented. Type 2 diabetes can be prevented.