

American Diabetes Month

Almost everyone knows someone who has diabetes. An estimated 17 million people – almost 6.2 percent of the population – in the United States have diabetes mellitus – a serious, lifelong



condition. About 5.9 million people have not yet been diagnosed. Each year, about 1 million people age 20 or older are diagnosed with diabetes.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism – the way our bodies use digested food for growth and energy. Most of the food we eat is broken down into glucose, the form of sugar in the blood. Glucose is the main source of fuel for the body. After digestion, glucose passes into the bloodstream, where it is used by cells for growth and energy. For glucose to get into cells, insulin must be present. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas, a large gland behind the stomach. When we eat, the pancreas is supposed to automatically produce the right amount of insulin to move glucose from blood into our cells. In people with diabetes, however, the pancreas either produces little or no insulin, or the cells do not respond appropriately to the insulin that is produced. Glucose builds up in the blood, overflows into the urine, and passes out of the body. Thus, the body loses its main source of fuel even though the blood contains large amounts of glucose.

Type 1 Diabetes

Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease. In diabetes, the immune system attacks the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas and destroys them. The pancreas then produces little or no insulin. Someone with type 1 diabetes needs to take insulin daily to live.

Presently, scientists do not know exactly what causes the body's immune system to attack the beta cells, but they believe that autoimmune, genetic, and environmental factors, possibly viruses, are involved. Type 1 diabetes accounts for about 5 to 10 percent of diagnosed diabetes in the U.S. and develops most often in children and young adults, although the disorder can appear at any age.

Symptoms develop suddenly and include increased thirst and urination, constant hunger, weight loss, blurred vision, and extreme fatigue. If not diagnosed and treated with insulin, a person can lapse into a life-threatening diabetic coma.

Type 2 Diabetes

The most common form of diabetes is type 2 diabetes. About 90 to 95 percent of people with diabetes have type 2. This form of diabetes usually develops in adults age 40 and older and is most common in adults over age 55. About 80 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight. Type 2 diabetes is often part of a metabolic syndrome that includes obesity, elevated blood pressure, and high levels of blood lipids. Unfortunately, as more children and adolescents become overweight, type 2 diabetes is becoming more common in young people.

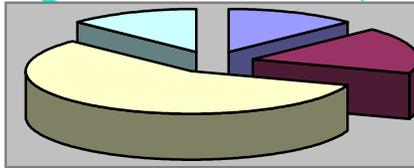
When type 2 diabetes is diagnosed, the pancreas is usually producing enough insulin, but, for unknown reasons, the body cannot use the insulin effectively, a condition called insulin resistance.

Symptoms develop gradually unlike type 1. They include fatigue or nausea, frequent urination, unusual thirst, weight loss, blurred vision, frequent infections, and slow healing of wounds or sores.

Statistics

- 2.8 million African Americans have diabetes.
- On average, African Americans are twice as likely to have diabetes as white Americans of similar age.
- African Americans have higher incidence of and greater disability from diabetes complications such as kidney failure, visual impairments, and amputations.

- Asian and Pacific Islander Americans have genetic, medical, and lifestyle risk factors for type 2 diabetes.
- For Asian and Pacific Islander Americans ages 45 to 64, diabetes ranked as the fifth-highest cause of death.
- Type 1 diabetes in APIA youth is relatively rare; however, recent reports highlight an increasing incidence of type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents.



- In 2000, about 2 million Hispanic Americans were known to have diabetes.
- 10.2 percent of all Hispanic Americans have diabetes.
- Hispanic Americans with diabetes have a higher incidence of diabetes complications such as eye and kidney disease than non-Hispanic whites. However, they may have lower rates of heart disease.

- ◆ Type 1 diabetes in American Indian and Alaska Native youth is relatively rare; however, recent reports highlight an increasing incidence of type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents.
- ◆ On average, American Indians and Alaska Natives are 2.6 times as likely to have diabetes as non-Hispanic whites of a similar age.



7 Principles for Controlling Your Diabetes for Life

1. Find Out What Type of Diabetes You Have.
2. Get Regular Care for Your Diabetes.
3. Learn How to Control Your Diabetes.
4. Treat High Blood Sugar.
5. Monitor Your Blood Sugar Level.
6. Prevent and Diagnose Long-Term Diabetes Problems.
7. Get Checked for Long-Term Problems and Treat Them.



People who have diabetes and keep their blood sugar levels under control can expect to live a long and active life.