

Type 2 Diabetes

WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is a problem with your body that causes blood glucose (sugar) levels to rise higher than normal. This is also called hyperglycemia.

When you eat your body breaks food down into glucose and sends it into the blood. Insulin then helps move the glucose from the blood into your cells. When glucose enters your cells, it is either used as fuel for energy right away or stored for later use. In a person with diabetes, there is a problem with insulin. But, not all people with diabetes have the same problem.

The types of diabetes are type 1, type 2, and a condition called gestational diabetes, which happens when pregnant. If you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin, it can't use the insulin it does make very well, or both.

WHAT IS TYPE 2 DIABETES?

In type 2 diabetes, your body does not use insulin properly. This is called insulin resistance. At first, the pancreas makes extra insulin to make up for it. Over time your pancreas isn't able to keep up and can't make enough insulin to keep your blood glucose levels normal. Type 2 is treated with lifestyle changes, oral medications (pills), and insulin.

Some people with type 2 can control their blood glucose with healthy eating and being active. But, your doctor may need to also prescribe oral medications or insulin to help you meet your target blood glucose levels. Type 2 usually gets worse over time – even if you don't need medications at first, you may need to later on.

HOW IS TYPE 2 DIFFERENT FROM TYPE 1?

In type 1, your body treats the cells that make insulin as invaders and destroys them. This can happen over a few weeks, months, or years. When enough of the cells are gone, your pancreas stops making insulin, or makes too little insulin.

Without insulin, your blood glucose rises higher than normal, so the insulin needs to be replaced.

WHAT CAUSES TYPE 2 DIABETES?

Scientists do not know the exact cause of type 2 diabetes. However, development of type 2 diabetes has been associated with several risk factors. These risk factors include:

- history of hyperglycemia, prediabetes, and/or gestational diabetes (GDM)
- overweight and obesity
- physical inactivity
- genetics
- family history
- race and ethnicity
- age
- high blood pressure
- abnormal cholesterol

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE USED FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES?

The two goals of diabetes treatment are to make sure you feel well day-to-day and to prevent or delay long-term health problems. The best way to reach those goals is by:

- taking medications, if your doctor prescribes them
- planning your meals—choosing what, how much, and when to eat
- being physically active

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY DIABETES TREATMENT IS WORKING?

Getting an A1C test at least twice a year helps you and your health care team keep track of how well you are controlling your blood glucose levels. A1C is part of your diabetes ABCs, which will tell you if your overall diabetes treatment is working. The ABCs of diabetes are:

A: A1C or estimated average glucose (eAG)

Your A1C check tells you your average blood glucose for the past 2 to 3 months. It's the blood check "with a memory." Your health care provider may call this your estimated average glucose or eAG. The eAG gives your A1C in the same units (mg/dl) as the glucose meter you use at home.

B: blood pressure

Your blood pressure numbers tell you the force of blood inside your blood vessels. When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder.

C: cholesterol levels

Your cholesterol numbers tell you about the amount of fat in your blood. One type, LDL cholesterol, can clog your blood vessels and lead to heart disease.