

Wellness News



Tips to stay healthy throughout the year
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Let's Talk Diabetes

More and more Americans are being diagnosed with diabetes. 9.4% of the U.S. population has diabetes. That means 30.3 million Americans have this chronic condition.

Diabetes is a condition in which blood glucose (sugar) is too high. The body uses sugar from food as a source of energy. Insulin, a hormone made in the pancreas, moves sugar from the bloodstream into cells to be used for energy.

When you have diabetes, your body either does not make enough insulin or does not use its own insulin as well as it should. As a result, sugar builds up in the blood. Extra sugar in the blood can lead to serious health complications including:

- Heart disease
- Blindness
- Kidney failure
- Lower-extremity issues

What causes diabetes?

You may have wondered, what causes diabetes? There are different forms of diabetes but the underlying cause is still unknown. Although we do know that both genetics and lifestyle play a significant part.

Type 1 diabetes

Chronic diabetes conditions include Type 1 diabetes and Type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is

an autoimmune condition. It occurs when the immune system attacks and destroys the cells in the pancreas that make insulin. People with type 1 diabetes don't produce insulin. Your genes may cause this type of diabetes. It often begins in childhood.

Type 2 diabetes

About 90% of people with diabetes have type 2. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body does not use insulin efficiently and as the condition progresses the pancreas does not make enough insulin. People with type 2 diabetes don't respond to insulin as well as they should. Genetics, lifestyle and environmental factors play a role in type 2 diabetes.

Gestational diabetes

Insulin resistance that occurs during pregnancy is called gestational diabetes. It usually occurs in 2% to 10% of pregnancies and typically goes away after birth. It's not only important to control gestational diabetes to protect the baby's growth and development but women who have gestational diabetes are at risk of developing type 2, weeks or even years later.

Prediabetes

Prediabetes is when your blood sugar is higher than it should be but not high enough for diabetes. More than a third of people in the United States have it, but most don't know it. Prediabetes can make you more likely to get type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Who gets diabetes?

One in four Americans with diabetes has it and doesn't know it. You are more likely to develop prediabetes or type 2 diabetes if you are age 45 or older, have a family history of diabetes, or are overweight. Physical inactivity, race, and certain health problems also affect your change of developing prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.

Know your risk

It's important to know your risk factors. The American Diabetes Association provides a free Diabetes Risk Test to see if you are at risk for type 2 diabetes. [Take the free risk test now.](#)

Uncontrollable risk factors:

- **Family history**—any blood relative with diabetes increases your own risk
- **Ethnic background**—you are at a greater risk if you are African American, Latino/Hispanic American, Native American or Pacific Islander
- **Age**—the older you are, the greater your risk
- **History** of gestational diabetes

Risk factors you can make an impact on:

- **Overweight/obesity**
- **Physical inactivity**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Abnormal cholesterol levels**

Symptoms

If you think you might have diabetes, you should schedule a visit with your primary care provider (PCP). Some symptoms of diabetes are

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Sudden vision changes
- Extreme hunger
- Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet
- Fatigue

How can diabetes be prevented?

There's no cure for diabetes but with lifestyle changes and treatment you can live a long, healthy life. Some risk factors for these conditions are uncontrollable, such as sex and age. However, there are lifestyle behaviors we can adopt to help reduce the overall risk.

Reducing Risk

- Keep a healthy weight
- Eat a healthy, well balanced diet
- Exercise regularly
- Limit or avoid alcohol intake
- Avoid tobacco use
- If you have a family history of any medical condition, talk with your doctor

Support & Resources

It's important to talk to your PCP about your risk factors and ask if getting tested is right for you. A simple blood test can determine whether or not you have diabetes. If you do, your provider can work with you to create a treatment plan and recommend lifestyle changes to protect your long-term health and wellness.

CareFirst Resources

- [Scale Back Diabetes Prevention](#) – Cut your risk of developing diabetes in half. The diabetes prevention program can help you lose 5-10% of your body weight. To find out if you are eligible take the online assessment from your Sharecare account. From the Achieve section, select Programs, then click Scale Back to begin the assessment.
- [One-on-One Health Coaching](#) – If you've already been diagnosed with diabetes, we encourage you to receive additional support to help improve your overall well-being by enrolling in disease management coaching at 877-260-3253 and press option 7.