

## **Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)**

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### **DESCRIPTION**

Type 2 diabetes is a disease that affects the way your body uses food and insulin. People with diabetes cannot make energy from the food they eat. Sugar stays in the blood instead of mixing in the body's cells. In the past, type 2 diabetes was called non-insulin-dependent diabetes. The most common type of diabetes, it affects about 15 million Americans. It usually occurs in people over 40 who are overweight. About seven million Americans have been diagnosed, and another eight million remain undiagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

### **CAUSES**

Medical experts do not know the exact cause of type 2 diabetes. They do know type 2 diabetes runs in families, but it usually takes another factor such as being overweight, physical inactivity, stress or illness to bring on the disease. As people become older or overweight, they are more likely to have diabetes. The pancreas, which produces insulin, may or may not work properly. A person's cells may become unable to use the insulin made by the pancreas. Without enough insulin your body cannot move sugar from the blood into the cells. Sugar builds up in the bloodstream. High blood sugar levels can cause severe problems.

Women who have given birth to large babies (babies weighing nine pounds or more) or had diabetes during pregnancy also have a higher risk of developing diabetes later in life.

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

- Increased urination
- Excessive thirst and drinking a lot of fluids
- Increased appetite
- Weight gain or loss
- Blurred vision
- Skin infections
- Vaginal infections
- Tiredness
- Slow healing sores
- Abnormal feelings of prickling, burning or itching of the skin on the hands or feet.

### **DIAGNOSIS**

Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and test the level of sugar in your blood. He or she may also test a sample of your urine for sugar.

### **TREATMENT**

The major goal of treatment is to control the level of sugar in your blood. Meal planning, exercise and medication do this. Your health care provider will help you with meal planning. If you are overweight, limiting the calories in your diet will help you lose weight. Losing weight, even modest amounts like seven to ten pounds, can reduce or eliminate your need to take medication for diabetes.

Physical activity is important in managing type 2 diabetes. Exercise improves your circulation and uses up more sugar in your blood. Walking is one of the best exercises you can do. Ask your health care provider for exercise recommendations.

Your doctor may prescribe tablets or insulin to control your blood sugar in addition to diet and exercise. These tablets help your pancreas produce more insulin or use it more effectively. If the tablets do not work, the doctor may prescribe insulin. Medications work best in combination with diet and exercise.

### **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- Follow your meal plan, eat healthy
- Eat meals at the proper time and on a regular schedule
- Use a scale to weigh portions of food
- Learn how to make healthy choices when you eat out
- Eat food and drinks with carbohydrates and fat in moderation
- Drink water or other calorie-free drinks (diet soda) when you have the urge to eat between meals
- Avoid eating large quantities at meals or snacks
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink
- Choose a diet with plenty of vegetables and grains
- Eat only at a table
- Eat slowly and chew your food thoroughly
- Learn how to do proper skin care
- Learn how to care for your feet
- Ask your health care provider for a list of signs and symptoms of low blood sugar (dizziness, nausea, sweating, hunger, shakiness)
- Carry a sugared snack with you at all times to treat a low blood sugar attack
- Always carry identification that says you have diabetes, in case of an emergency.

For more information, contact your health care professional or the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-232-3472 or [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).