

# Diabetes



## Embracing Health

Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose (sugar) levels are above normal. Simply put, people with diabetes have problems converting food to energy. Type 2 diabetes develops because the cells in the muscles, liver, and fat do not use insulin properly. Over time, the pancreas is unable to make enough insulin for the body's needs which results in the elevated blood glucose levels. This cycle causes the cells to be starved of energy. Eventually high blood glucose damages nerves and blood vessels which in turn can cause heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease, nerve problems, gum infections, and in some instances, even necessitate amputation.

## Start a Dialogue

**My 411!** Ask yourself, what do I know about type 2 diabetes? Is there a history of diabetes in my family?

**Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. Do you routinely check my blood glucose levels? How often should I have this done?

## Embracing Women

8.9% of all women in the United States have diabetes. If you find that figure shocking, hold on! Nearly one third of these women don't even know they have diabetes. It's important for women to actively work to prevent diabetes because among other complications, they have an increased risk of vaginal infections and complications during pregnancy. Diabetic women are also at higher risk than men for cardiovascular disease, diabetic coma, and

peripheral vascular disease affecting the legs and feet.

## Consider Gender Differences

**My 411!** Ask yourself, since I am at greater risk for type 2 diabetes than a man, does this mean I should eat and exercise differently too?

**Talk 2 Me!** Tell your doctor. My husband (boy-friend, son ...) is diabetic. If we have similar lifestyles, eat the same foods, get the same amount of exercise – am I more likely to develop diabetes too? Are women tested differently than men?

## Embracing Lifestyles

The greatest risk factor for type 2 diabetes is obesity. Although a cure has yet to be found, eating right, maintaining a healthy weight, and making sure you get plenty of exercise goes a long way in preventing the onset of this disease. This does not mean you have to eat only bland, boring foods. To help prevent or control type 2 diabetes eating foods that are high in nutrition and low in fat and calories is the key. Making fruits, vegetables and whole grains a consistent part of your daily diet is a good place to begin. Limiting animal products and sweets assists your body to keep blood glucose levels in the healthy range.

## Get a Handle

**My 411!** Ask yourself, how can I tweak my diet a bit so I'm making sure I get a healthy balance of fruits, grains, and vegetables every day? What foods should I eliminate?

**Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. I hear a lot about pre-diabetes. What actions can I take to make sure I am not headed in this direction? Is there a diet to prevent diabetes?

## Embracing Common Sense

Knowing the signs and symptoms associated with type 2 diabetes is very important. Frequent urination and increased thirst are two very common indicators. Other symptoms include a sort of overall flu-like feeling accompanied by extreme fatigue and weakness. An unexplained weight loss or gain may also accompany the onset of type 2 diabetes. Some people notice blurred vision, sores that heal more slowly than normal, frequent infections, tingling or burning in the hands, arms, legs or feet, and/or tender red, swollen gums. If you notice these symptoms take action.

## Create Healthier Habits

**My 411!** Ask yourself, what can I do to squeeze in a bit more exercise every day?

**Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. I'm afraid I may be a couch potato and I don't want to end up paying with my health. For my age what type of exercise do you think would have the most benefit?

## Embracing Science

Although why some people get type 2 diabetes and others don't isn't quite clear, there are certain factors that increase your risk. These include: having a parent or sibling with the

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disease; being overweight; inactivity; age (your risk increases as you get older); race (African-Americans, Hispanics, Latino Americans, American Indians, native Hawaiians and other Pacific islanders, as well as some Asian-Americans); and young adults suffering from depression (researchers speculate this is because of weight gain and inactivity.)

## It's Time for Show and Tell

**My 411!** Ask yourself, do I fully understand what my personal risk factors for type 2 diabetes are?

**Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. My blood glucose levels have been a bit high the last few times I've been tested. I want to prevent type 2 diabetes, so what additional tests should I have?

## Possible tests for Diabetes

The American Diabetes Association recommends that all adults have a fasting blood glucose test at age 45. Other tests that routinely detect diabetes include: random blood sugar tests; a glucose challenge test (often used to screen pregnant women for gestational diabetes); and a glycated hemoglobin test (used after a diagnosis of diabetes has been made to measure your average blood glucose level over 2 or 3 months.)

## Make Smart Choices

**My 411!** Ask yourself; although I'm afraid of having type 2 diabetes, I suppose I should be more fearful of having it and not knowing! Am I noticing any of the signs or symptoms associated with this disease?



**Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. I've noticed that I'm drinking a lot more water than normal, and have also been urinating more often. Should I be worried about this being a sign of type 2 diabetes?

## Possible treatments for diabetes

Controlling blood sugar is essential in order to feel healthy and avoid long-term complications. Some people can control their blood glucose levels with diet and exercise alone. Others may need to take medications. Both will need to make lifestyle changes! Monitoring blood sugar is essential. Although most of us are familiar with insulin injections, there are several drug options available for treatment of type 2 diabetes. Some stimulate your pancreas to produce and release more insulin. Others inhibit the production and release of glucose from your liver. Some block enzymes in your digestive tract that break down carbohydrates. There are drugs to make your body tissues more sensitive to insulin. Your healthcare team will work closely with you to develop a treatment plan designed specifically for you.



**My 411!** Ask yourself, am I doing everything possible to control my diabetes?

**Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. Is it possible to control my diabetes through simple diet and exercise? Can we at least try this approach?

## Embracing Strength

Type 2 diabetes is one of the most preventable diseases afflicting women. It also has some of the most severe complications if undetected or untreated. You can help prevent this disease by having a yearly physical and eye exam, seeing your dentist regularly, not smoking, avoiding alcohol, monitoring your blood pressure, paying attention to your cholesterol levels, and learning to manage stress. And perhaps most importantly – eating right and getting enough exercise! If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations faithfully!

## Simple Steps

**My 411!** Ask yourself, when was the last time I had a complete physical?

**Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. I am hearing more and more about how rampant type 2 diabetes is. I want to stay healthy, so I need your help. What changes do you think would be the most beneficial for me personally so that I can prevent this disease as I age?

