



# Your Guide to Diabetes

Diabetes — Don't Sugar Coat it  
Detection, Control and Treatment

Healthy

# What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic (long-lasting or constantly occurring) disease that affects how your body turns food into energy. Some of the food you eat becomes glucose (sugar) and enters your bloodstream. When the amount of sugar in your blood increases, the pancreas releases insulin into your bloodstream. Insulin helps your body use sugar for the energy it needs, and then store the rest. If you have diabetes, your body either does not make enough insulin or is unable to use the insulin effectively.



## What should my blood sugar goals be?

Goals	Target
Before meals	80-130 mg/dl
1-2 hours after meals	Less than 180 mg/dl
A1C	Less than 7%

*Note: Blood sugar goals/target may vary depending on each person's individual treatment plan.*

# What are the different types of diabetes?

There are three main types of diabetes.

## **Type 1 Diabetes**

This is a condition caused by an autoimmune reaction (the body attacks itself by mistake). Type 1 diabetes occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys cells in the pancreas that creates insulin.

## **Type 2 Diabetes**

This is a condition caused by a combination of the pancreas not creating enough insulin and the body responding poorly to insulin, making it difficult for your body to maintain normal blood sugar levels. This type is more common in older adults; however, this diagnosis is on the rise for young adults, teens, and children.

## **Gestational Diabetes**

This is when an individual has diabetes while pregnant. During pregnancy, the placenta may cause glucose to build up in your body. If your body cannot create enough insulin, the blood sugar will rise and cause gestational diabetes. Gestational diabetes usually goes away after childbirth but may increase your risk for type 2 diabetes later in life. It may also increase your baby's chance to become obese as a child or teen and develop type 2 diabetes later in life.

# What are the risk factors for diabetes?

Common risk factors for Type 1, Type 2 and Gestational Diabetes include:

- **Race/ethnicity:** Type 1 diabetes is higher among Caucasians while Type 2 diabetes and Gestational diabetes is higher among African Americans, Hispanics/Latino Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islanders.
- **Family history:** Have a family history of diabetes.



Additional Risk factors for:  
Type 1 Diabetes:

- **Age:** Likely to develop when you are a child, teen, or young adult.

Type 2 Diabetes:

- **Prediabetes:** (high blood sugar levels but not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes).
- **Age:** 35 years of age or older, it is more likely for you to develop type 2 diabetes.
- **Physical Activity:** Are physically active less than 3 times a week.
- **Gestational diabetes:** May increase your risk for type 2 diabetes.
- **Weight:** Being overweight or obese.

Gestational Diabetes:

- **Gestational diabetes:** during a previous pregnancy.
- **Previous Pregnancy:** Previously giving birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds.
- **Age:** 25 years of age or older, it is more likely for you to develop gestational diabetes
- **Weight:** Excess weight or obesity.
- **Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS):** A hormonal disorder common among women of reproductive age.

# What are the complications of diabetes?

Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to complications including:

## **Heart Attack and Stroke**

Diabetes increases the risk for various heart problems.

## **Nerve Damage (Neuropathy)**

Tingling, numbness, burning or pain that usually begins at the tips of the toes or fingers and gradually spreads upward.

## **Kidney Damage (Nephropathy)**

Diabetes can damage the tiny blood vessel clusters (glomeruli) in the kidneys that filter waste from our blood.

## **Eye Damage (Retinopathy)**

Diabetes can damage the blood vessels of the retina and increase the risk of other serious vision conditions, such as cataracts and glaucoma.

## **Skin Conditions**

Bacterial infections, fungal infections, and foot ulcers.

## **Hearing Impairment**

## **Oral Health**

Tooth decay, cavities, and gum disease.

## **Mental Health**

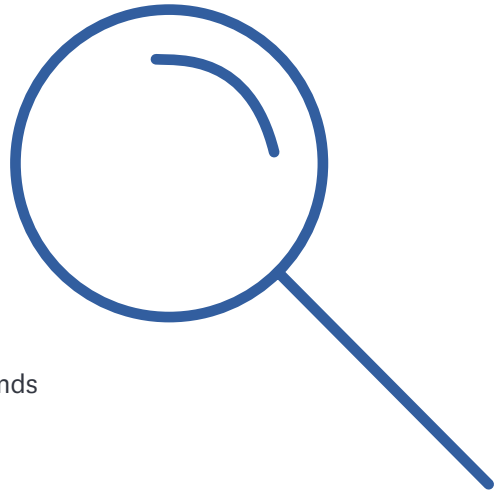
Depression, stress, and anxiety.



# What are the signs or symptoms I may experience with diabetes?

## Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination (often at night)
- Extreme hunger
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Numbness or tingling in feet or hands
- Frequent infections
- Dry skin
- Nausea
- Cuts, bruises, or sores that are slow to heal



## Gestational Diabetes

Typically does not have any symptoms but is associated with the following health risks:

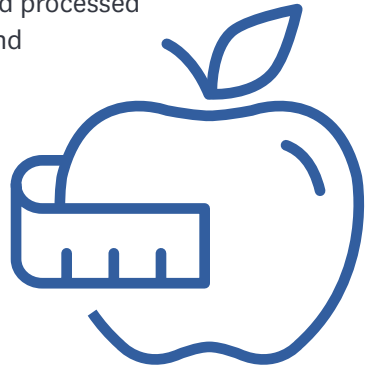
- Premature birth
- Developing preeclampsia: Pregnancy complication involving high blood pressure and signs of damage to other organs such as liver and kidneys. Preeclampsia can lead to serious, even fatal complications for you and your baby.
- Having a surgical delivery (C-section)
- Higher birth weight of the baby

You should see your doctor if you notice any signs or symptoms of diabetes. They will be able to diagnose you and provide the best course of action to treat your condition.

# How can I manage my diabetes?

Currently, there is no cure for diabetes and no known ways to prevent Type 1 Diabetes. Type 2 Diabetes and Gestational Diabetes can be managed or prevented.

- **Healthy eating:** Avoid sugary drinks, monitor carbohydrate intake, and limit red and processed meats. Focus on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- **Being active:** Just 30 minutes of brisk walking a day can cut your risk by almost a third. Before starting any type of physical activity, it is encouraged that you consult with your doctor or a health care professional.
- **Monitoring:**
  - Check your blood sugar levels (fingerstick or continuous blood glucose monitor)
  - Check your blood pressure and feet regularly
  - Discuss getting your A1C bloodwork done regularly with your doctor
  - Get yearly eye exams, foot exams, dental exams, cholesterol checks, and kidney function tests
- **Taking medications:** Keep a medication diary to help you create excellent medication-taking habits, and take medications as prescribed by your doctor in the appropriate dosage, at the right time, and in the right way. Ask questions and get answers that you understand about how to take your drugs. Remember to take your Medication List when you go to the doctor, hospital, or emergency room. Share it with family and caregivers.



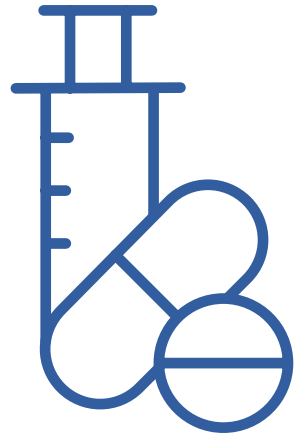
- **Problem solving:** Request assistance from your diabetes care team in developing your own “what to do if” strategy, such as if you have low blood sugar, want to consume more food, or are too unwell to eat. Keep track of how well you solve difficulties and get assistance if you need it.
- **Reducing risk:** Reducing your risks such as losing excess weight, quitting smoking, getting an annual flu shot and regular checkups.
- **Healthy coping:** Learn how to manage living with diabetes. Identify the sources of your anxiety and tension. Understand that depression is more common among people with diabetes, and it is okay to ask for help.



# How is diabetes treated?

## Diabetes Medication

Some people with diabetes need to take medicines to help keep their blood sugar at a healthy level. There are different kinds of medicines used to treat diabetes. Each kind affects your body in a different way. Some diabetes medicines are taken as pills that you swallow, and others are injected. The medicine you take will vary by your type of diabetes, tolerability, and effectiveness at controlling your blood sugar. You may need oral, injectable or a combination of medications to manage your diabetes.



## Type 1 Diabetes

People with type 1 diabetes make very little or no insulin in their bodies. They must be treated with insulin every day to stay alive.

## Type 2 Diabetes

People with type 2 diabetes do not make enough insulin or do not use it well enough. Some people with type 2 diabetes are treated with pills, injections, and/or insulins to manage blood sugar levels.

## Gestational Diabetes

Some women with gestational diabetes need to be treated with insulin to control their blood sugar.

## Why is it important to take my medication?

By taking your medications and controlling your blood glucose levels in your body, you can reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke, and kidney damage. Diabetes is a progressive disease, which means that the longer you have it, the more treatments you'll need to keep your heart, eyes, and kidneys healthy.

## **What are some best practices for getting the most out of my medication?**

Keep an updated list of all your current medications including all prescription and over-the-counter medications. Create a daily routine for taking and tracking your medications. Always ask for more information if you have any questions or concerns about your medications.

## **What questions should I ask my doctor/pharmacist?**

- How do I know if I need medicine for diabetes?
- What is the name of my medicine?
- How will my medicines affect my blood sugar?
- How and when should I use this medicine?
- How long will I need this medicine for?
- What are the possible side effects of taking this medicine?
- What other prescription and over-the-counter medications may interact with my diabetic medicines?
- What if I forget to take my medicine or take a dose incorrectly?
- How often should I test my blood sugar?
- What should I do if I am pregnant, planning to get pregnant, or breastfeeding?
- How can I learn more about my condition?

# Where can I find more information?

For information about taking your medicine the right way, attending one of our live virtual or on-demand classes and/or ordering your very own free pillbox, please visit the following websites:

ConnectiCare: **[www.connecticare.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence](http://www.connecticare.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence)**

EmblemHealth: **[www.emblemhealth.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence](http://www.emblemhealth.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence)**

## References

1. American Diabetes Association: Research, Education, Advocacy, **[www.diabetes.org/](http://www.diabetes.org/)**.
2. “Diabetes Basics.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 21 Dec. 2021, **[www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/index.html)**
3. “Diabetes.” Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 30 Oct. 2020, **[www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/symptoms-causes/syc-20371444](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/symptoms-causes/syc-20371444)**

*Note: The information provided in this brochure does not replace the need for a medical care professional. Please speak to your doctor if you have any questions.*



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Living