



Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes Information for Staywell Members

What Is Type 1 Diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes is a disease that starts when the pancreas stops making insulin. Insulin lets blood sugar—also called glucose—enter the body's cells. The cells then use it for energy. The cells can't get the sugar they need without insulin. Then too much sugar builds up in the blood. Diabetes can cause sudden or long-term problems. Diabetic ketoacidosis can happen if blood sugar gets very high and the body doesn't have enough insulin. This is a sudden and very serious problem. It can be deadly. High blood sugar can damage the eyes, heart, blood vessels, nerves and kidneys. Type 1 diabetes can occur at any age. But it usually starts in children or young adults. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of the illness. Type 1 and type 2 diabetes are different. In type 1, the body stops making insulin. In type 2, the body does not make enough insulin. Or the body can't use insulin the right way. All people with type 1 diabetes need to take insulin. Some people with type 2 diabetes also need insulin. But most people can use diet, exercise and drugs to treat it. There isn't a cure for type 1 diabetes. But with treatment, people with type 1 can live long and healthy lives.

What Causes Type 1 Diabetes?

The body makes insulin in beta cells. These cells are in a part of the pancreas called the islet ("EYE-let") tissue. Type 1 diabetes starts because the body destroys the beta cells. Experts don't know why this happens. Some people have a greater chance of getting type 1 because they have a family member who has it. But most people with the illness don't have a family history of it. Other things that increase the risk of getting type 1 are being white and having islet cell antibodies in the blood.

What Are the Symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes?

Symptoms are:

- Being very thirsty.
- Urinating a lot.
- Losing weight without trying.
- Being hungrier than usual (sometimes).

These signs usually appear over a few days or weeks. Sometimes people notice them after an illness like the flu. They may think that the signs are because of the flu. Then they don't seek care soon enough.

If a person waits too long to get care, he or she may get symptoms of diabetic ketoacidosis. Symptoms of this problem include:

- Flushed, hot, dry skin.
- Not feeling hungry.
- Belly pain.
- Vomiting.
- A strong, fruity breath odor (similar to nail polish remover).
- Fast and shallow breathing.
- Restlessness, drowsiness or trouble waking up.
- Confusion.

How Is Type 1 Diabetes Diagnosed?

A doctor asks questions about the person's health. Then he or she does an exam. A blood test measures the person's blood sugar. Some people are diagnosed with type 1 because they have warning signs described earlier.

How Is It Treated?

Treatment for type 1 seeks to keep blood sugar levels close to normal. A person with type 1 needs to:

- Take insulin.
- Eat a healthy diet.

- Check blood sugar levels several times a day.
- Get regular exercise.

When a small child has diabetes, the parents should be in charge of blood sugar control. The child can take over more of the care as he or she grows. Treatment may change over time. This is based on the results of daily home blood sugar tests and other tests.

Can Type 1 Diabetes Be Prevented?

There is no way to prevent type 1. But studies are being done to find ways to prevent or delay it in people who are most likely to get it. Tight control of blood sugar and blood pressure can help prevent or delay problems.

What Is Type 2 Diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes happens when the cells of your body can't use insulin the right way. It also happens when the pancreas can't make enough insulin. Insulin lets blood sugar enter the body's cells. The cells use sugar for energy. The cells can't get the sugar they need when insulin can't do its job. Then too much sugar builds up in the blood. This extra sugar in the blood can hurt your eyes, heart, blood vessels, nerves and kidneys.

More and more adults and children are getting type 2 diabetes. Why? Largely because of poor eating habits and a lack of physical activity. It is important to know if you or your children are at risk for type 2. And you should know what you can do to help prevent it.

What Causes Type 2 Diabetes?

You can get type 2 if:

- Your body does not respond properly to insulin. This makes it hard for your cells to get sugar from the blood for energy. This is called insulin resistance.
- Your pancreas does not make enough insulin.

Your weight and how active you are affect the way your body responds to insulin. So does family history. You are at greater risk of getting type 2 if you are overweight or don't exercise. You are also at risk if you have family members with diabetes.

What Are the Symptoms?

Some people don't have symptoms. This is especially true early on. Blood sugar level may rise so slowly that a person may not know that anything is wrong. Other people may have symptoms such as:

- Being very thirsty.
- Urinating a lot.
- Losing weight without trying.
- Having blurry vision.
- Feeling hungrier or more tired than usual.

A person may find out that he or she has type 2 during a regular checkup. Or people may find out while getting care for another issue. Some people don't find out that they have it until they have a problem from the disease.

How Is Type 2 Diabetes Diagnosed?

A doctor will ask you questions about your medical history. He or she will do an exam. There will be a test of your blood sugar. This test sees how much sugar in your blood.

How Is It Treated?

The key to treating type 2 diabetes is controlling blood sugar levels. All of the following help with this:

- Eating healthy foods that are lower in sugars or fats
- Losing weight.
- Getting regular exercise.
- In some cases, taking medicines.

Treatment also includes checking blood sugar levels. This is to make sure that the disease is under control. It is important to watch for signs of high and low blood sugar. Both can cause problems and need to be treated.

People with diabetes need regular checkups to make sure their treatment is working and that they do not get more serious health problems.

Can Type 2 Diabetes Be Prevented?

Are you at risk? You may prevent diabetes by getting regular exercise. Also pay attention to what and how much you eat. If you are overweight, losing a little weight (10 to 20 pounds) can help too.

References

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