



November Is American Diabetes Month



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November is American Diabetes Month, a time to communicate the seriousness of diabetes and the importance of proper diabetes control. Many people are at risk for diabetes. It is important to understand this disease and ways to control it. Most people have heard of diabetes but few know just what it is or how to treat it.

The body uses glucose, a type of sugar, as its fuel. This glucose comes from the food you eat. The pancreas releases insulin into the bloodstream. Insulin helps move the glucose into the cells of organs such as the brain, nerves and muscles for energy.

People with diabetes either can't use or make enough insulin to move the glucose from the blood into the cells. So when you have diabetes, sugar builds up in the blood instead of going into the cells. Since the cells aren't getting enough fuel, you may feel very thirsty or tired.

The causes of diabetes are not fully understood. Because the body can't lower blood glucose on its own, you will need to learn to balance what you eat with your exercise and medicine to control your diabetes.

TYPE 1 DIABETES

The pancreas of a person with type 1 diabetes (formerly known as Juvenile Diabetes) makes little or no insulin. People with type 1 diabetes must take insulin to live. Approximately 10% of people with diabetes have type 1. It is diagnosed most often in children and young adults and genetics may play a role in its development.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

In type 2 diabetes (once called adult-onset diabetes), the pancreas still makes some insulin, but cannot use it effectively. The body may not make enough insulin to control blood sugar. Approximately 90% of people with diabetes have type 2. The cause is unknown, but treatment includes lifestyle changes such as healthy eating, weight loss and exercise. Some people may also need pills and/or insulin to control their blood sugar.

GESTATIONAL DIABETES

About seven percent of pregnant women develop gestational diabetes during the second or third trimester. It often can be treated with a healthy meal plan but some women do require insulin. Blood sugar usually returns to normal levels after delivery, but women diagnosed with gestational diabetes are at risk for type 2 diabetes later in life.

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PREDIABETES

A fasting blood test may reveal a blood glucose that is not high enough to be considered diabetes, but is above normal. People in this group have prediabetes, which can increase their risk of developing diabetes. There are ways to prevent or slow the progression to diabetes. The most important methods of prevention are following a healthy diet that promotes weight loss and increasing exercise.

RISK FACTORS FOR DIABETES

Certain risk factors can increase the chance of diabetes:

Family history of diabetes: Diabetes, especially type 2, appears to be an inherited tendency. Have a parent or sibling with type 2 diabetes increases the risk.

Certain ethnic groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islander Americans

Overweight: A person 20% overweight is twice as likely to develop type 2 diabetes. Exercise and weight management can prevent type 2 diabetes in some people.

History of gestational diabetes: Women diagnosed with gestational diabetes are at risk to develop type 2 later in life.

SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES

If you notice one or more of the following symptoms on a recurring basis, tell your physician immediately

Extreme thirst or hunger

Frequent urination

Sudden, unexplained weight loss

Sudden vision change or blurred vision

Slow healing cuts and sores

Increased fatigue/decreased energy

Irritability

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF DIABETES

High blood pressure, foot problems, heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, poor circulation, skin and mouth infections, vision problems, nerve damage.

For more information including counseling or resources, please contact Centerpoint. You can also contact your physician or the American Diabetes Association or call 1-888-DIABETES.