

Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease in which blood sugar (glucose) levels in your body are too high. Diabetes can cause serious health problems, including heart attack or stroke, blindness, problems during pregnancy, and kidney failure.

Q: What are the different types of diabetes?

A: The three main types of diabetes are:

- **Type 1 diabetes.** If you have type 1 diabetes, your body does not make insulin, so you must take insulin every day.
- **Type 2 diabetes.** This is the most common type of diabetes. With type 2 diabetes, your body does not make enough insulin or is not able to use its own insulin correctly.
- **Gestational diabetes.** Gestational diabetes happens only during pregnancy. Gestational diabetes can cause health problems for the baby and the mother if not controlled.

Q: Am I at risk for diabetes?

A: Risk factors for **type 1 diabetes**:

- Age: It often develops in childhood.
- Family health history
- Certain viral infections or illnesses, such as rotavirus (also called stomach flu) and mumps
- Living in a colder climate

Risk factors for **type 2 diabetes**:

- Overweight or obesity
- Older age: 45 or older
- Family health history
- Family background of African-American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, Asian-American, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Having a baby that weighed 9 pounds or more at birth
- Having diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes)
- High blood pressure: Taking medicine for high blood pressure or having a blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher. (Both numbers are important. If one or both numbers are usually high, you have high blood pressure.)
- High cholesterol: HDL cholesterol of 35 mg/dL or lower and triglycerides of 250 mg/dL or higher
- Lack of physical activity: People who are active less than three times a week
- Having polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- Personal history of heart disease or stroke

Q: Is there anything I can do to prevent diabetes?

A: Researchers do not know how to prevent **type 1 diabetes**.

You can help prevent **type 2 diabetes** with the following steps:

- **Losing weight.** Obesity is a leading risk factor for diabetes. If you're overweight or obese, start making small changes to your eating habits and get more physical activity.
- **Eating healthy.** Choose vegetables, whole grains (such as whole wheat or rye bread, whole grain cereal, or brown rice), beans, and fruit. Read food labels to help you choose foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium. Limit processed foods and sugary foods and drinks.
- **Getting active.** Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week and limit the amount of time you spend sitting.

For more information...

For more information about diabetes, call the OWH Helpline at 800-994-9662 or contact the following organizations:

National Diabetes Education Program, CDC, HHS

800-232-4636 • www.ndep.nih.gov

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse, NIDDK, NIH, HHS

800-860-8747 • www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

American Diabetes Association

800-342-2383 • www.diabetes.org

This fact sheet was reviewed by:

Nilka Rios Burrows, M.P.H., MT (ASCP), Epidemiologist, Division of Diabetes Translation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Sue Penckofer, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N., Professor and Faculty Scholar, School of Nursing, Loyola University Chicago, Health Sciences Campus
Mary Ann Emanuele, M.D., Professor, School of Medicine, Loyola University Chicago
Lauretta Quinn, Ph.D., R.N., A.P.N., C.D.E., F.A.A.N., Associate Professor, College of Nursing, University of Illinois
Joanne Kouba, Ph.D., R.D.N., Associate Professor and Director, Dietetic Education Programs, School of Nursing, Loyola University Chicago
Patricia Sheean, Ph.D., R.D.N., Research Associate, School of Nursing, Loyola University Chicago
Jennifer Woo, M.S.N., R.N., W.H.N.P., C.N.M., Doctoral Student, School of Nursing, Loyola University Chicago

All material contained in this fact sheet is free of copyright restrictions and may be copied, reproduced, or duplicated without permission of the Office on Women's Health in the Department of Health and Human Services. Citation of the source is appreciated.

Content last updated: August 4, 2015.

Content last reviewed: October 29, 2014.



www.facebook.com/HHSOWH



www.twitter.com/WomensHealth



www.youtube.com/WomensHealthgov

www.womenshealth.gov | 800-994-9662

