

# Understanding Diabetes

## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic (long-term) disease where the body doesn't make or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone the body makes to change sugar, starches, and other foods into energy. If you have diabetes, it means you have too much glucose in your blood (blood sugar). There are four types of diabetes: Type 1, Type 2, Gestational, and Pre-diabetes.

## What are the signs and symptoms of diabetes?

Finding diabetes early can prevent life-threatening health problems. If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor to get tested for diabetes:

- Blurry vision
- Frequent urination
- Increased thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Unusual weight loss
- Increased tiredness
- Irritability
- Very dry skin
- Sores that heal slowly
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet

## How do you manage diabetes?

Diabetes can't be cured, but it can be managed. Keeping your blood sugar level within the target range is one of the most effective ways to manage your diabetes. Other diabetes management tips include:

- Following a healthy diet.
- Exercising 30 minutes each day.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Checking your blood sugar every day.
- Checking your feet for cuts, sores, blisters, or swelling.
- Keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control.
- Taking your medications, if prescribed by your doctor.

Maintaining control of your diabetes can lower your risk of serious complications to your heart, eyes, feet, kidneys, and blood vessels. Talk to your doctor to come up with a diabetes management plan that's right for you.



## Risk Factors

The following may increase your chances of getting diabetes:

- Family history
- Physical inactivity
- Overweight and obesity
- Age (45 or older)
- Race (African American, Latino, Pacific Islander)
- Pre-diabetes

## Types of Diabetes

**Type 1 diabetes:** When the body can't make its own insulin.

**Type 2 diabetes:** When the body can't properly use its own insulin.

**Gestational diabetes:** Diabetes that happens during pregnancy and usually goes away after giving birth.

**Pre-diabetes:** When blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be diagnosed as Type 2 diabetes.

2/28/2011

