



Live Well, Work Well

Type 2 diabetes causes the body to resist insulin, a hormone that controls the absorption of sugar.

DIABETES: TYPE 2

Between 90 and 95 percent of those diagnosed with diabetes in the United States have Type 2 diabetes. Formerly called adult onset diabetes or noninsulin-dependent diabetes, the condition is increasing at an alarming rate due to the current obesity levels in the United States.

About the Condition

Type 2 diabetes causes the body to resist insulin, a hormone that controls the absorption of sugar. As a result, a normal glucose level cannot be maintained. People can develop Type 2 diabetes at any age, including during childhood years. Unlike Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 is usually preventable with a balanced diet and exercise. Unfortunately, once present, Type 2 diabetes cannot be cured, and can be life-threatening if left untreated.

Causes and Risk Factors

While it is not completely understood why some people develop Type 2 diabetes, research has shown the following factors significantly increase the risk of developing the disease.

- Obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Genetics
- High blood pressure
- Abnormal cholesterol levels

- Ethnicity (being African American, Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian or Asian American)
- Age (risk increases as you get older, especially after age 45)
- Having pre-diabetes—left untreated, it likely will develop into Type 2 diabetes
- Previously or currently having gestational diabetes
- Giving birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds

Symptoms

Consult your doctor if you're concerned about diabetes, or if the following symptoms appear:

- Increased thirst and frequent urination
- Extreme hunger
- Weight loss despite eating more than usual
- Blurred vision
- Fatigue
- Slow-healing sores or frequent infections
- Patches of dark skin in folds and creases of the body

Testing

It is recommended that anyone 45 years of age or older consider getting tested for diabetes, as well as those under age 45 who are overweight. The following tests are used for diabetes diagnoses:

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- **Fasting plasma glucose test:** This measures blood glucose after abstaining from eating for at least eight hours.
- **Oral glucose tolerance test:** This measures blood glucose after at least eight hours without eating and two hours after drinking a glucose-containing beverage.
- **Random plasma glucose test:** During this test, the physician checks blood glucose no matter when the last meal was consumed. This test is administered in addition to an assessment of symptoms such as increased thirst and urination, and unexplained weight loss.

Positive results should be confirmed by repeating the fasting plasma glucose test or oral glucose tolerance test on another day.

Management

Those diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes need to follow a stringent daily plan to ensure that blood glucose is kept in the proper range, such as:

- Following a specific meal plan
- Being physically active
- Taking prescribed medication, including insulin if needed
- Testing blood glucose as recommended
- Keeping daily records of blood glucose levels and any unusual issues that come up during the day

Dangers and Complications

Left uncontrolled, there are several serious complications that can arise from type 2 diabetes, such as:

- Heart and blood vessel disease
- Blindness or eye disease
- Kidney failure
- Nerve damage
- Osteoporosis
- Skin infections

- Alzheimer's disease
- Gum infections

Prevention

Take the following precautions to help avoid developing Type 2 diabetes:

- Get a routine diabetes screening.
- Make healthy food choices—select foods low in fat like fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Monitor salt intake and choose foods with a low salt content.
- Get more physical activity—aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity a day. If a long workout is not possible, break it up into smaller sessions spread throughout the day.
- Lose excess weight—even a loss of 10 pounds may lower the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

For more information, contact the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org.