

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a serious chronic disease. It happens when too much glucose stays in the blood stream because there is either no insulin or not enough insulin that can move the glucose into the body's cells. Glucose is the form of sugar that cells need to make energy.

The pancreas is a gland near the stomach. The pancreas makes insulin to take glucose out of the blood stream and move it into cells. In diabetes, the body either cannot make insulin or cannot use the insulin it has. This leaves too much sugar in the blood because there is not enough insulin to move the sugar into the cells.

Diabetes is a serious disease that can damage nerves and blood vessels. This damage can lead to digestive problems, gum disease, depression, blindness, amputations, stroke, heart attack, and kidney failure.

Controlling blood sugar levels helps to prevent these problems. Good control is achieved by daily attention to food, physical activity, weight, checking blood glucose, and taking medicines as ordered. Regular checkups (including blood tests, dental exams, eye exams, and foot exams) are recommended.



Warning signs of diabetes

- Excessive thirst or hunger
- Frequent urination
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Infections, cuts or sores that are slow to heal
- Blurry vision
- Tingling or numbness of the feet or hands
- Frequent skin, dental (gum), urinary or yeast infections
- Feeling that you have “no energy”
- Male impotence

Two types of diabetes

1

Type 1 diabetes...

- Causes the body to produce little or no insulin.
- Is usually diagnosed under the age of 20, but can occur at any age.
- Does not usually run in families, but there is a higher risk.
- Accounts for about 1 in 10 cases of diabetes.

2

Type 2 diabetes...

- The body is unable to use insulin properly.
- Is usually diagnosed in people over 30 years of age, but is being found more frequently in youth who are overweight.
- Tends to run in families; has a strong genetic risk.
- Being overweight and inactive raises this risk.
- Accounts for most (90%) of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.