

# UNDERSTANDING DIABETES



## Start with the basics.

Did you know that 29.1 million people in the United States have diabetes, and an estimated 86 million people age 20 years or older have prediabetes? And, one in four people who have diabetes don't even know they have it.<sup>1</sup> That's why it's so important to understand what diabetes is, and how to recognize the signs. After all, the more you know, the more informed decisions you can make about your health.

### What is diabetes?<sup>2</sup>

The simple definition of diabetes is a disease that happens when you have a high level of glucose (also called blood sugar) in your blood. But to truly understand what diabetes is, it's helpful to understand how it occurs.

### HERE'S AN AT-A-GLANCE VIEW:

**Blood glucose** is your main source of energy. It comes from the food you eat.

Insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas, helps glucose from food get into your cells to be used for energy.

If your body doesn't produce enough insulin or the insulin doesn't work the way it should, **glucose can stay** in your blood and not reach your cells.

If your blood glucose levels get too high, this can cause **diabetes or prediabetes**.

### What is prediabetes?

Prediabetes is when the amount of glucose in your blood is higher than normal, but not quite high enough to be considered diabetes. With prediabetes your chances of getting type 2 diabetes are higher. If caught early enough, you can delay or prevent the development of diabetes by making healthy lifestyle changes.<sup>3</sup>



Together, all the way.®



# THE THREE MOST COMMON TYPES OF DIABETES: TYPE 1, TYPE 2 AND GESTATIONAL DIABETES.<sup>2</sup>

## TYPE 1 DIABETES

Develops most often in young people, but it can also develop in adults. With type 1 diabetes, the body's immune system has attacked and destroyed the cells that make insulin, thus decreasing the body's insulin production.

## GESTATIONAL DIABETES

Can develop when a woman is pregnant. Pregnant women make hormones that can lead to insulin resistance. All women have insulin resistance late in their pregnancy, but some experience it earlier on.

If the pancreas doesn't make enough insulin during pregnancy, a woman develops gestational diabetes. While gestational diabetes typically goes away after the baby is born, a woman who has had gestational diabetes is more likely to develop type 2 diabetes later in life.

## TYPE 2 DIABETES

If you have type 2 diabetes, your body does not make or use insulin well. It develops most often in middle-aged and older people, but it can also affect people at any age - even children. People who are overweight and have a family history of diabetes are also more likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?<sup>4</sup>

Some people with diabetes don't have any signs or symptoms at all, so it's important to see your doctor and get your blood work. If you do experience symptoms, here are some of the most common.



INCREASED THIRST



INCREASED HUNGER



FREQUENT URINATION



FATIGUE



UNEXPLAINED WEIGHT LOSS



SLOW HEALING SORES



PINS AND NEEDLES FEELING IN YOUR FEET



DRY, ITCHY SKIN



LOSS OF FEELING IN YOUR FEET



BLURRY EYESIGHT



**Have questions or concerns about your diabetes risk?**

Talk with your doctor, who can make the appropriate recommendations based on your health history.



Sources:

1. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. "Diabetes." <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes> (accessed November 9, 2016)
2. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. "What is Diabetes?" <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/what-is-diabetes> (November 2106)
3. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. "Preventing Type 2 Diabetes." <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/preventing-type-2-diabetes> (November 2016)
4. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. "Symptoms and Causes of Diabetes." <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/symptoms-causes> (November 2016)

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