



Here is a fact about diabetes that you can share.

Fact: *Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney disease.*

What is diabetes?

Diabetes means that the amount of glucose (sugar) in your blood is too high. That's why people sometimes call diabetes "sugar" or "sweet blood." Your blood always has some glucose in it because your body needs glucose for energy, but too much of it in the blood isn't good for your health.

Diabetes can lead to serious complications and premature death, but people with diabetes can take steps to control the disease and lower the risk of complications.

There are two main types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes**, previously called juvenile diabetes, is usually first diagnosed in children, teenagers, or young adults. People with type 1 diabetes make no insulin and must take insulin every day. (Insulin helps the body use glucose from food for energy).
- **Type 2 diabetes**, previously called adult-onset diabetes, is the most common form of diabetes. With type 2 diabetes, the body does not make or use insulin well. People with type 2 often need to take pills or insulin. Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes. Being overweight and living a sedentary lifestyle increases the chances of developing type 2 diabetes.

Am I at risk for diabetes?

- Are age 45 or older
- Are overweight
- Are African American, Hispanic, Asian American or Pacific Islander, or American Indian
- Have a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes
- Have high blood pressure
- Have low HDL (good cholesterol) and high levels of blood fats
- Had diabetes when pregnant, or gave birth to a large baby (over 9 pounds)
- Are physically active less than three times a week

How do I know if I have diabetes?

You may have one or more of the warning signs listed on the next page, or you may have no signs at all. Talk to your health care provider about getting a blood test to check your glucose levels to know if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes (a condition where blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough for a diagnosis of diabetes).

The signs of Type 2 diabetes are:

- Being very thirsty
- Urinating often (especially at night)
- Feeling very hungry or tired
- Losing weight without trying
- Having sores that heal slowly
- Having dry, itchy skin
- Losing the feeling in your feet or having tingling in your feet
- Having blurry eyesight

What can I do to control or prevent diabetes?

Managing diabetes requires effort every day to eat healthy foods, be physically active, take diabetes medicine as prescribed, and test blood glucose levels. You can take steps to prevent or slow down other health problems diabetes can cause over the years by keeping your blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol under control. If you have diabetes, work with your health care provider to create a plan for managing your health. You can do a lot to lower your chances of getting diabetes. Some tips are:

- Be physically active on a regular basis
- Eat less fat and fewer calories
- Lose weight if you need to

All people with diabetes need to make healthy food choices, stay at a healthy weight, and be physically active every day. Taking good care of yourself and your diabetes can help you feel better. It may help you avoid health problems caused by diabetes such as:

- Heart disease and stroke
- Eye problems that can lead to trouble seeing or going blind
- Nerve damage that can cause your hands and feet to feel numb. Some people may even lose a foot or a leg
- Kidney problems that can cause your kidneys to stop working
- Gum disease and loss of teeth

For More Information

Contact the National Diabetes Education Program at 1-800-438-5383 or www.ndep.nih.gov. You also may learn more by visiting the American Diabetes Association online at www.diabetes.org.