

## Tips on Identifying and Living with Diabetes

You've seen the commercials for diabetes treatments. You might know someone who has it, or even have it yourself. But did you know as of 2015, over 30 million Americans had diabetes — and more than 1 in 4 didn't even know it? Diabetes is the largest and fastest-growing chronic disease in the U.S. But diabetes management and treatments have come a long way in recent years. If you have diabetes, you have options.

### What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease where blood glucose is too high. Insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas, helps your cells use glucose for energy. With diabetes, the body doesn't make enough or any insulin, keeping glucose from reaching the cells, which can cause other health problems. There are three common types of diabetes.



#### Type 1

The body does not make insulin. People with Type 1 need to take insulin daily. This type is usually diagnosed in children or young adults, and experts believe the causes are genetic or environmental. Type 1 is currently not preventable, and there is no cure.

#### Type 2

The body does not make or use insulin well. Type 2 occurs most often in middle-aged and older people. It can be caused by obesity, not being physically active, insulin resistance or genetics. It can be prevented through diet and exercise and may be reversible according to some studies.

#### Gestational

While gestational diabetes develops during pregnancy and typically goes away after birth, it does make the mother more likely to develop Type 2 later in life.

People almost always develop **pre-diabetes** before developing Type 2 diabetes. Pre-diabetes, often part of Metabolic Syndrome, means your blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as diabetes. Pre-diabetes doesn't always lead to diabetes — if you begin treatment early, you can possibly prevent developing Type 2. Studies show if you have pre-diabetes you can lower your risk of developing diabetes by 58% by losing around 7% of your body weight and adding moderate exercise to your routine (30 minutes a day, five days a week).

# The Impact of Diabetes

Diabetes care can be costly when factoring in patient education, special equipment and supplies. Health insurance coverage makes a big difference for those with diabetes. Most states have mandates that require health insurance policy coverage for diabetes treatment. These typically require coverage for direct treatment, as well as diabetes equipment and supplies used at home.



Diabetes is treatable, so it's important to manage it to keep it in check. It requires self-management through testing and monitoring blood glucose levels, as well as regular visits with a doctor. Common checks for diabetics include blood pressure, foot exam, weight and dental exam.

Important numbers for all diabetics to manage are:







**A: The A1C test, which measures average blood sugar level over three months**

**B: Blood pressure**

**C: Cholesterol**

Checking these items regularly can help prevent heart attack, stroke and other problems.

Educate yourself and manage your diabetes with a **Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES)** program. These services provide education and help build skills and routines to manage diabetes. They're customized to individual needs and goals and are guided by evidence-based standards. The cost varies depending on health care coverage, but most insurances cover at least a portion. Topics covered include:

-  Basics of diabetes and its treatment
-  Healthy diet
-  Exercise
-  Diabetes medication
-  Blood sugar testing
-  Reducing diabetes-related risks

Programs are offered in person, online or over the phone.

## What New Treatments are There for Diabetes?

Currently there is no cure for diabetes, but there is hope. Common treatments include oral drugs and, in some cases, injectable insulin. Newer drugs, improved devices to monitor blood sugar levels and more understanding on the impact of diet and exercise on diabetes are all adding up to better quality of life for diabetics.



There are also some breakthroughs in finding a cure for diabetes. **Cell therapy** is a treatment still in early stages that would replace the missing insulin-providing cells to recover normal production

of insulin in Type 1 diabetics. Other Type 1 trials include **immunotherapy**, designed to have the immune system destroy the specific immune cells that attack insulin-producing cells. For Type 2 diabetes, scientists are working on drugs that **induce insulin production or control sugar levels**. Many companies are also working on **new monitoring software** to replace finger pricking. These devices could measure glucose with electromagnetic waves, laser light or radio waves. In the next few years, we could see huge strides in diabetes research.

If you have diabetes or pre-diabetes, take the time to educate yourself and make sure your quality of life is the best it can be.

