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Healthy Insights

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Diabetes: What You Need to Know

About 37 million Americans are affected by diabetes, according to the **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases** (<https://bit.ly/3SivzqG>), and diabetes is the eighth leading cause of death in the United States. Those who already have diabetes can avoid complications by practicing proper self-management. While a diabetes diagnosis can be scary, there are steps you can take to lead a healthy, happy life.

Types of Diabetes

Diabetes generally happens when the body stops producing the hormone insulin, leading to excess sugar in the bloodstream. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the body attacks your pancreas, causing it to produce no insulin at all. Gestational diabetes occurs in pregnant women who have never had diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is usually diagnosed in older adults and is largely preventable. It occurs when the body doesn't respond to insulin. Type 2 diabetes often follows prediabetes, a condition in which blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be considered type 2 diabetes. Talk to your healthcare provider about getting screened for diabetes if you are 35 years old or younger with health issues.



Look Out For...

If you have not been diagnosed with diabetes but are experiencing one or more of the following symptoms, ask your doctor if you should be concerned about diabetes. Symptoms may include:

- Frequent urination
- Constant thirst and hunger
- Extreme tiredness
- Blurry vision
- Wounds that heal slowly
- Tingling, pain, or numbness in hands and/or feet

Having diabetes means that you could be at higher risk for heart and kidney disease, skin, eye and feet problems, obesity, strokes, and some types of cancer.

Prevention Works

There are many ways to prevent Type 2 diabetes as you get older. The best way is to sustain a healthy lifestyle by maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active. Healthy weights are different for everyone. Talk to your doctor about the right weight for you, and what kind of diet and exercise routine can help you achieve that.

Many hospitals, health systems, community-based organizations and even health departments offer Diabetes Prevention Programs. These educational programs have been shown to help prevent or delay the onset of Type 2 diabetes in adults who are at high risk. Visit <https://bit.ly/3Me9Igf> to learn about Diabetes Prevention Programs near you.

Managing Highs, Lows, and Everything In Between

You can manage diabetes daily by eating a healthy diet that is low in carbohydrates, added sugars and saturated fat, and incorporating physical activity into your schedule. These healthy habits should be followed, even if you are prescribed insulin to help regulate your



blood sugar. You should also track your blood sugar levels, food and beverage intake, insulin dosages, and physical activity in order to keep your blood sugar at its target level. Eating a healthy diet may include controlling your meal portions, choosing foods that have fewer calories, fats, sugars, and sodium, drinking water instead of sugary drinks and alcohol, and fruit instead of candies and other sugary sweets.



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Tracking all of this, taking your medication as prescribed, even when you feel well, along with seeing your doctors regularly, can help catch problems or complications before they become serious. Talk about a long-term health management plan that you can follow with your doctor..

Is There a Connection Between Diabetes and Dementia?

Some studies have shown that people with diabetes, especially type 2 diabetes, have a higher chance of developing dementia later in life because of high blood sugar's damaging effects on the brain. While not all people with diabetes will develop dementia, and not all cases of dementia are related to diabetes, keeping an eye on your health and making healthy decisions every day can delay or prevent both conditions from getting worse.

Sources

National Diabetes Month 2023 | NIH
<https://bit.ly/46WIkvl>

What is diabetes? | CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/diabetes.html>

Type 2 Diabetes | CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/type2.html>

Diabetes and cognitive decline | Alzheimer's Association <https://bit.ly/45ZznQC>

IPRO Healthy Insights comes from Dr. Clare Bradley, IPRO's Senior Vice President/Chief Medical Officer, a nationally recognized public health advocate.

IPRO is a non-profit organization that works with government agencies, providers and patients to measure and improve healthcare for all. For over 35 years we've made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to make the healthcare system work better.