

## Tipsheet: Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease that affects the body's ability to produce or process insulin, a hormone that permits glucose (blood sugar) to enter the body's cells and create energy. If a person has diabetes, glucose builds up in the bloodstream rather than entering cells. Over time, high blood sugar levels can cause serious damage to major body organs—including the eyes, kidneys, and blood vessels.

### Facts

- Diabetes is a chronic disease with no known cure.
- 16 million Americans have diabetes but many don't know that they have it.
- Diabetes is the fourth leading cause of deaths in the United States.
- 2,200 individuals are diagnosed with diabetes every day.
- Diabetes is the principal cause of new cases of blindness among adults (ages 20-74).
- Diabetes is linked to neovascular glaucoma. There are usually no symptoms, so early detection is key in effective treatment and saving your eyesight. Read more about [glaucoma](#).
- Diabetes increases your risk of developing cataracts, the clouding of the lens of your eyes.

### Two Main Types

#### Type 1 Diabetes

An autoimmune disease, in which the body stops making insulin or makes only a tiny amount. This type used to be called juvenile-onset diabetes, because it occurs most often in children and adolescents (though it can occur at any age). People with this type of diabetes must inject insulin every day (this type also is called insulin-dependent diabetes). About 800,000 people in the United States have Type 1 diabetes.

#### Symptoms

Symptoms usually occur suddenly. Those most at risk include siblings of people with Type 1 diabetes and children of parents with Type 1 diabetes.

- Dramatic weight loss
- Excessive thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Irritability
- Frequent urination
- Weakness and fatigue

#### Type 2 Diabetes

A metabolic disorder, in which the body does not produce enough insulin or cannot use it well. Once called adult-onset diabetes, this type normally occurs after age 45. Also called non-insulin dependent diabetes, most people with Type 2 do not inject insulin (but may take pills). This is the most common form of diabetes with 90-95 percent of cases and more than 15 million people in the United States

#### Symptoms

Symptoms usually occur gradually. Those most at risk include individuals who are more than 45-years-old, have a family history of diabetes, are overweight, do not exercise regularly, have a low HDL cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides, come from certain higher incidence racial/ethnic groups (African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans), and women who have had gestational diabetes during pregnancy.

- Any of the Type 1 symptoms plus:
- Blurred vision
- Cuts or sores that heal slowly
- Frequent infections
- Itching or numbness/tingling in hands and feet
- Recurring or hard-to-heal skin, gum, or bladder infections

Source: American Diabetes Association, 1-800-DIABETES, [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)