

# WHAT IS DIABETES?

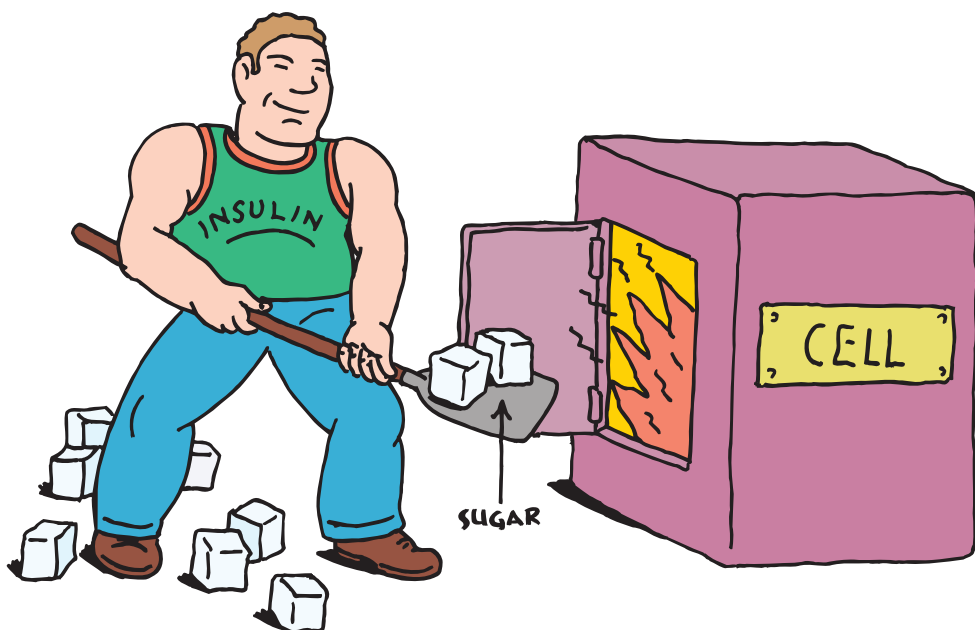


**D**iabetes means you have too much sugar in your blood. The medical word for sugar in the blood or blood sugar is *glucose*, but most people just say *sugar*.

Your body changes most of the food you eat into sugar (glucose). Sugar travels in your blood to all the cells in your body. Your body makes a chemical called *insulin* to help sugar move from your blood into your cells. Your cells need sugar to give you energy and keep you healthy.

When you have diabetes:

- ☐ your body does not make insulin
- ☐ your body does not make enough insulin, or
- ☐ the insulin you make doesn't work right



Blood sugar levels stay high if you don't have enough insulin to move sugar from your blood into your cells. Over time, high blood sugar levels that are not lowered cause diabetes.



The most common types of diabetes are type 1 and type 2.

## **Type 1 diabetes**

In type 1 diabetes, the body cannot make insulin. Type 1 diabetes occurs more often in children and young adults than in older adults. People with type 1 diabetes must inject insulin to control their blood sugar.

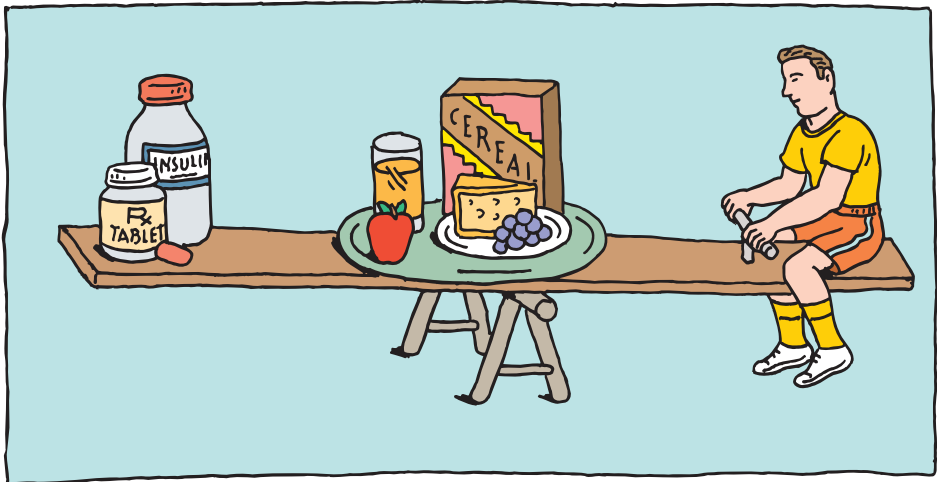
## Type 2 diabetes

In type 2 diabetes, the body can make some insulin, but not enough. Or, the insulin the body makes does not work right.

Type 2 diabetes often starts in adults, but children can have it too. It is more common in overweight people or if someone in the family has diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is controlled by balancing when and how much you eat with:

- ☐ how active you are
- ☐ your weight, and
- ☐ the diabetes medicine you take



## High blood sugar

Because insulin isn't working right, sugar in your blood may spill into your urine. High blood sugar and sugar in the urine may cause problems, such as:



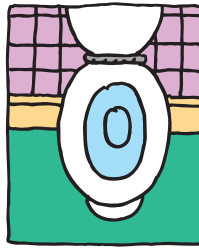
feeling tired



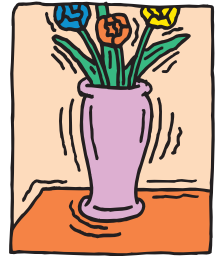
weight loss



feeling thirsty

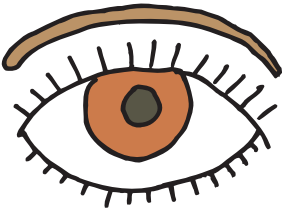


a need to  
urinate often



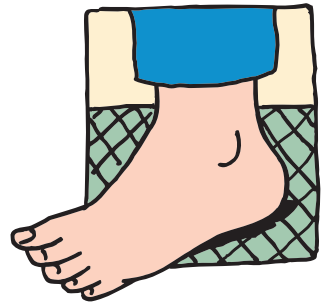
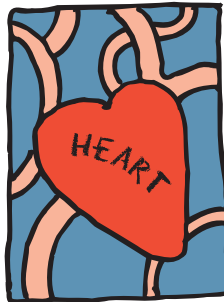
blurry vision

Controlling diabetes is important. You can have serious health problems when your blood sugar is out of control, such as:



eye problems –  
even blindness

heart disease

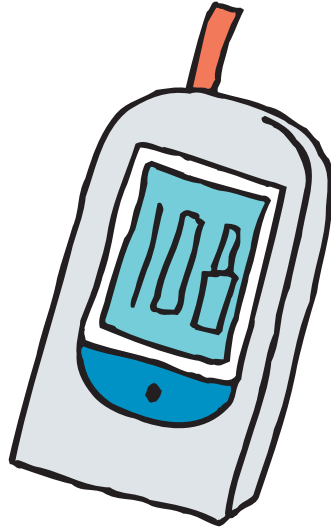


foot problems – even  
losing a foot or leg

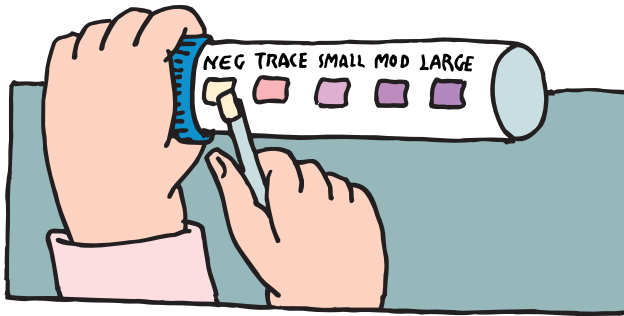
## Blood sugar and ketone tests

You can have a high blood sugar problem but not know it. That's why it is important to check your blood sugar often.

Most people check their blood sugar by testing a drop of their blood in a special meter.



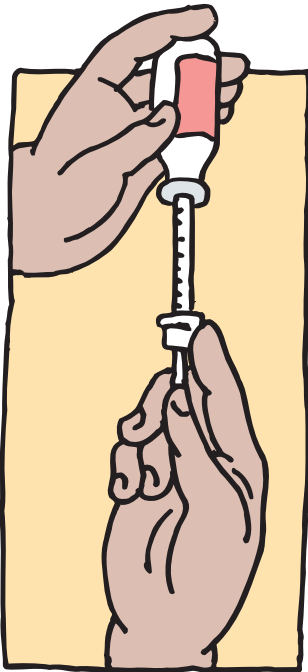
Another important blood test is the A1C. This test shows your average blood sugar level over the past 2 to 3 months.



A urine test is used most often to tell if you have ketones in your urine. Ketones mean your blood sugar level is very high. Call your doctor right away if you have ketones. You may be having a medical emergency.

## Medicine for diabetes

Most people with diabetes take medicine to control their blood sugar. Diabetes pills work in different ways to help lower blood sugar. If you take a pill for diabetes, take it at the same time every day. And learn what to do if you forget to take your pill. You don't want to take a missed pill with your next pill.



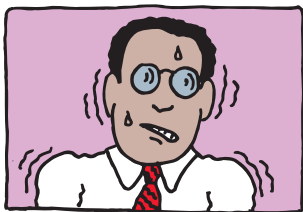
If you take insulin, you will learn how, where, and when to inject it. Many people use a needle and syringe to inject insulin. Insulin pens and insulin pumps are also used. It is important to know where to keep your insulin and how long you can use it. Call your doctor or health clinic right away if you have questions about using insulin.

## Low blood sugar

Insulin or pills help control diabetes but can sometimes cause low blood sugar. This can happen if you:

- ☐ are too active
- ☐ don't eat enough
- ☐ skip a meal
- ☐ take too much medicine

The signs or symptoms of low blood sugar include

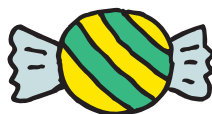


feeling shaky, dizzy, sweaty, upset, hungry, or tired.

If you have a low blood sugar problem, it's important to eat or drink 15 grams of a fast-acting food high in sugar right away, such as:



- ☐ 1/2 can of regular (not diet!) soda
- ☐ 1 tablespoon (or two packets) of real sugar
- ☐ 3 hard candies you can eat quickly





## Blood sugar goals

Your doctor will help you decide the blood sugar goals that are best for you. Write your goals in the table below.

| Blood Sugar (Glucose) Goals*             |                         |           |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Time                                     | Adults<br>With Diabetes | Your Goal |
| Before Meals                             | 70 to 130 mg/dL         |           |
| 2 Hours<br>After Meals<br>(postprandial) | Less than<br>180 mg/dL  |           |
| A1C                                      | 7% or less              |           |

\*American Diabetes Association guidelines (plasma values)

Before you leave the doctor's office or clinic, be sure you understand:

- ☐ how to use your meter
- ☐ what your blood test results mean, and
- ☐ what your blood sugar goals are

Call your doctor's office anytime you have questions about how to control your diabetes.

It can be hard at times to do the things you need to do to control diabetes. Join a support group. Tell your family and friends what they can do to help.

Diabetes cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. Eat healthy foods every day, be active often, and take your medicine – if you need to. You can lead a healthy life with diabetes!



Always talk to your doctor before making any changes in your diabetes treatment plan.