



The Facts about Type 2 Diabetes

What is type 2 diabetes?

More than 18 million Americans have type 2 diabetes, the most common form of diabetes, which accounts for about 90 to 95 percent of diagnosed diabetes cases.

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic, progressive and serious disease that occurs either when the body does not produce enough insulin or when the body does not respond properly to its natural insulin. As a result, sugar builds up in the blood and over time, high levels of blood sugar can lead to a variety of other serious health problems including: heart disease, stroke, eye damage, kidney failure and foot problems that lead to amputations.

Who is at risk for type 2 diabetes?

Some risk factors for type 2 diabetes include older age, obesity, a family history of diabetes, physical inactivity, a history of diabetes during pregnancy, and race/ethnicity. African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Native Americans, and some Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders are at particularly high risk for type 2 diabetes.

How can type 2 diabetes be managed?

The risk for serious health problems associated with high blood sugar levels often can be reduced. People with type 2 diabetes should work with their healthcare provider to develop a personal diabetes management plan. A good diabetes management plan includes:

Healthy Eating – A healthy diet is a way of eating that can help lower your blood sugar. Healthy eating includes eating a wide variety of foods such as vegetables, whole grains, fruits, non-fat dairy products, beans and lean meats, poultry and fish. There is no one perfect food, so including a variety of healthy foods and watching portion sizes are the keys to a healthy diet.

Regular Physical Activity—Regular physical activity can lower blood sugar by helping the body use its own natural insulin better. It can help manage weight and can also reduce the risk of developing heart disease and high blood pressure. Even without weight loss, exercise decreases insulin resistance, the underlying cause of type 2 diabetes.

Effective Medicines—Sometimes lifestyle changes alone may not be enough to lower blood sugar levels adequately. In addition to healthy eating and regular physical activity, many people with type 2 diabetes also may need one or more medicines. Some medicines work together in different ways to control blood sugar levels.

Blood Sugar Monitoring—Regular blood sugar monitoring allows people to track how their diabetes plan is working and to check with their doctor to see if lifestyle or medicine changes are needed to better manage their diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is monitored two ways: (1) patients check their own blood sugar levels with a blood glucose meter, and (2) healthcare professionals check A1c levels. The A1c test measures a person’s average blood sugar level, giving a snapshot of how well blood sugar is controlled. The American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists’ (AACE) A1c goal is 6.5 percent or lower.

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