Diabetes, Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS DIABETES?

Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose (*sugar*). Our bodies use it for energy. The pancreas makes a hormone called insulin. It helps glucose get into the cells of our bodies. When you have diabetes, your body either does not make enough insulin or cannot use its own insulin as well as it should. This causes sugars to build up in your blood.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES?

- Frequent urination.
- Excessive thirst.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Extreme hunger.
- Blurred vision.
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet.
- Feeling very tired much of the time.
- Dry, itchy skin.
- Sores that are slow to heal.
- Yeast infections.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF DIABETES?

Type 1 Diabetes

- About 10% of affected people have this type.
- Usually occurs before the age of 30.
- Usually occurs in thin to normal weight people.

Type 2 Diabetes

- About 90% of affected people have this type.
- Usually occurs after the age of 40.
- Usually occurs in overweight people.
- More likely to have:
  - A family history of diabetes.
  - A history of diabetes during pregnancy (*gestational diabetes*).
  - High blood pressure.
  - High cholesterol and triglycerides.

Gestational Diabetes

- Occurs in about 4% of pregnancies.
- Usually goes away after the baby is born.
- More likely to occur in women with:
  - Family history of diabetes.
  - Previous gestational diabetes.
  - Obese.
  - Over 25 years old.

WHAT IS PRE-DIABETES?

Pre-diabetes means your blood glucose is higher than normal, but lower than the diabetes range. It also means you are at risk of getting type 2 diabetes and heart disease. If you are told you have pre-diabetes, have your blood glucose checked again in 1 to 2 years.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR DIABETES?

Treatment is aimed at keeping blood glucose near normal levels at all times. Learning how to manage this yourself is important in treating diabetes. Depending on the type of diabetes you have, your treatment will include one or more of the following:

- Monitoring your blood glucose.
- Meal planning.
- Exercise.
- Oral medicine (*pills*) or insulin.

CAN DIABETES BE PREVENTED?

With type 1 diabetes, prevention is more difficult, because the triggers that cause it are not yet known.
With type 2 diabetes, prevention is more likely, with lifestyle changes:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat healthy.
- Exercise.

IS THERE A CURE FOR DIABETES?

No, there is no cure for diabetes. There is a lot of research going on that is looking for a cure, and progress is being made. Diabetes can be treated and controlled. People with diabetes can manage their diabetes and lead normal, active lives.

SHOULD I BE TESTED FOR DIABETES?

If you are at least 45 years old, you should be tested for diabetes. You should be tested again every 3 years. If you are 45 or older and overweight, you may want to get tested more often. If you are younger than 45, overweight, and have one or more of the following risk factors, you should be tested:

- Family history of diabetes.
- Inactive lifestyle.
- High blood pressure.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER SOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON DIABETES?

The following organizations may help in your search for more information on diabetes:

National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP)
Internet: http://www.ndep.nih.gov/resources
Telephone toll free: 1-888-693-6337

American Diabetes Association
Telephone: 703-549-1500
To order publications toll free: 1-800-ADA-ORDER
Diabetes information: 1-800-342-2383 (800-DIABETES)
Internet: http://www.diabetes.org

Juvenile Diabetes Foundation International
Telephone: 1-800-533-2873
Internet: http://www.jdf.org

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