

# Understanding

# DIABETES



## Diabetes

Diabetes is a problem with your body that causes blood glucose (sugar) levels to rise higher than normal. This is also called hyperglycemia.

There are different types of diabetes – type 1, type 2, and a condition called gestational diabetes, which happens during pregnancy. If you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough or insulin, it can't use the insulin it does make very well, or both.

### Symptoms

The following symptoms of diabetes are typical. However, some people with type 2 diabetes have symptoms so mild that they go unnoticed.

#### Common symptoms of diabetes:

- ▶ Urinating often
- ▶ Feeling very thirsty
- ▶ Feeling very hungry – even though you are eating
- ▶ Extreme fatigue
- ▶ Blurry vision
- ▶ Cuts/bruises that are slow to heal
- ▶ Weight loss – even though you are eating more (type 1)
- ▶ Tingling, pain, or numbness in the hands/feet (type 2)

## TYPE 1

In type 1 diabetes, your immune system mistakenly destroys the cells in your pancreas that make insulin. When enough of these cells are destroyed, your body can't get the glucose it needs for energy to the other cells in your body. Without insulin, your blood glucose rises to levels higher than normal.

### Causes

Scientists aren't sure what causes type 1 diabetes. It is not contagious and it is not caused by eating sugar. Research is under way to find the exact causes of type 1 diabetes and how it might be prevented.

### Treatment

The two goals of diabetes treatment are to make sure you feel good day-to-day and to prevent or delay long-term health problems. The best way to reach those goals is by:

- ▶ taking insulin
- ▶ planning your meals—choosing what, how much, and when to eat
- ▶ being physically active

## TYPE 2

In type 2 diabetes, your body does not use insulin properly. This is called insulin resistance. Type 2 diabetes develops most often in middle-aged and older adults but can appear in young people. Type 2 diabetes is a progressive disease. Even if you don't need to treat your diabetes with medications at first, you may need to over time.

### Causes

Scientists do not know the exact cause of type 2 diabetes. However, development of type 2 diabetes has been associated with several risk factors. These risk factors include:

- ▶ history of hyperglycemia, prediabetes, and/or gestational diabetes (GDM)
- ▶ overweight and obesity
- ▶ physical inactivity
- ▶ genetics
- ▶ family history
- ▶ race and ethnicity
- ▶ age
- ▶ high blood pressure
- ▶ abnormal cholesterol

### Treatment

The two goals of diabetes treatment are to make sure you feel good day-to-day and to prevent or delay long-term health problems. The best way to reach those goals is by:

- ▶ taking medications, if your doctor prescribes them
- ▶ planning your meals—choosing what, how much, and when to eat
- ▶ being physically active