

November 2018 Issue

Living with Diabetes: Causes, Types, Symptoms & Treatment

About one in ten people in the United States has some form of diabetes, a long-term (chronic) disease in which the body cannot regulate the amount of sugar (glucose) in the blood. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that the number may rise to one in three by 2050. Insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas, keeps the body's blood sugar level from getting too high (hyperglycemia) or too low (hypoglycemia.) Too little insulin, resistance to insulin, or both, can result in diabetes.



There are different types of diabetes. Causes and risk factors vary for each:

- **Type 1 diabetes** is less common. It can occur at any age, but most often is diagnosed in children, teens, or young adults. In this instance, the body makes little or no insulin, and daily injections are needed to help keep blood glucose at a normal level.
- **Type 2 diabetes** is more prevalent. It most often occurs in adulthood, but increasing numbers of children and teens are being diagnosed as a result of higher rates of obesity in these age groups. With Type 2 diabetes, the body becomes resistant to insulin and doesn't use it efficiently.
- **Gestational diabetes** is high blood sugar that occurs at any time during pregnancy in women who do not have diabetes.

High blood sugar level can cause several symptoms, including the following:

- Blurry vision
- Excess thirst
- Fatigue
- Frequent urination
- Hunger
- Weight loss

Symptoms of Type 1 diabetes develop over a short period. People may become extremely ill by the time they are diagnosed. Because Type 2 diabetes develops more slowly, some people with high blood sugar experience no symptoms.

Treating either Type 1 diabetes or Type 2 diabetes involves nutrition, activity and medicines to control blood sugar levels. Everyone with diabetes should receive proper education and support about the best ways to manage their diabetes. To prevent complications, it's important to visit your primary care physician consistently and follow his or her instructions on how best to manage your diabetes. Also, ask your primary care physician about consulting a certified diabetes educator (CDE) or participating in a diabetes education/management program.

For additional information and insights on "Living with Diabetes," check out the recent podcast episode of [Health Talk by TriHealth](#) featuring **Michael Heile, MD**, from TriHealth's Family Medical Group. Dr. Heile, a Type 1 diabetic himself, talks about the latest treatment and prevention strategies. He's joined by Don DiGiacomo, one of his patients, whose treatment has received a significant boost from new advances.

You can find the podcast online at: <https://www.trihealth.com/dailyhealthwire/diabetes/Health-Talk-by-TriHealth-Podcast-Living-with-Diabetes.aspx>.

Effects of Uncontrolled Diabetes on the Body

Statistics clearly show that diabetes affects a large population in this country and can lead to a multitude of health issues, or even prove fatal, if not controlled properly. Uncontrolled diabetes will damage your blood vessels and decrease circulation, which can result in a devastating impact on the body and its systems:



- **Heart Disease and Stroke**

People who do not control their diabetes are at least twice as likely to have heart problems and strokes as people who do not have diabetes. Those who combine smoking with uncontrolled diabetes are at an even higher risk.

- **Kidney Damage**

Uncontrolled diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure (nephropathy) in the U.S. With few early symptoms or warning signs, nephropathy can occur as long as a decade before symptoms first appear.

- **Nerve Damage**

Diabetic neuropathy, a form of nerve damage caused by uncontrolled, high blood sugar levels, is a serious and common complication of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. The condition usually develops slowly, sometimes over the course of several decades. It may cause numbness, tingling or pain in the extremities, loss of sensitivity to touch, muscle weakness, digestive symptoms, and other discomforts.

- **Vision Issues**

Damaged blood vessels in the eyes can cause visual disturbances like floaters. If left untreated, this can lead to blindness. Uncontrolled diabetes also can increase the risk of developing cataracts and glaucoma.

- **Infection**

Uncontrolled diabetes also can raise the risk for bacterial, fungal, and yeast infections, with the feet being the most vulnerable.

If diagnosed with diabetes, consult your health care provider for guidelines on your diet and exercise, and heed their advice to control your glucose levels. Your body will thank you!

Type 2 Diabetes on the Rise in Children and Teens

Not long ago, the diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes in children was rare. Unfortunately, the number per year now has grown to almost 3,700 new cases of Type 2 diabetes a year among U.S. youth. Specifically, Type 2 diabetes in youth ages 10- to 19-years old has increased 21 percent in the last 10 years.

Living with and managing diabetes each day can be a struggle for anyone; however, children experience additional concerns such as feeling like a burden on the family, being treated differently, and coping with parental questions about their food intake, how they are feeling and whether they have taken their insulin.

Managing diabetes while at school also can pose unique challenges. Many parents are concerned when their child starts or returns to school after being diagnosed with diabetes, but schools will ensure teachers understand and are familiar with safety measures:

- **Provide your student's school with a plan:** The plan must clearly outline the details of your child's diabetes management during school hours.
- **Inform your child's physical education (PE) teacher:** Physical activity can cause a drop in blood glucose levels, and it is important for the teacher to be able to recognize symptoms.
- **Encourage your child to tell their friends, at least their best friends:** Friends can be an extra set of eyes and ears in the diabetes management process.