



**Diabetes
is a word.
It's not a sentence.**

Your guide to understanding
diabetes – because your
health matters.

What is Diabetes

Diabetes is a serious chronic disease that occurs when the pancreas is no longer able to produce insulin or when the body cannot use the insulin it produces. Insulin is vital as it enables the metabolism of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins to produce energy. Not being able to produce insulin or use it effectively leads to raised glucose levels in the blood that causes damage to the body and failure of various organs and tissues.

Prediabetes is an intermediate state of hyperglycemia where blood glucose levels are above normal, but below the threshold for diagnosing diabetes.



Types of diabetes

There are three main types of diabetes – Type 1, Type 2 and Gestational diabetes.



Type 1

Type 1 diabetes can develop at any age but occurs mostly in children and adolescents. It is an auto-immune condition. When you have type 1 diabetes, the immune system does not recognise your pancreatic cells and attacks these insulin-producing cells. Type 1 diabetic patients require injectable insulin at diagnosis to survive.



Type 2

This is the most common type of diabetes, accounting for around 90% of all diabetes cases. It is characterised by insulin resistance. When insulin does not work efficiently (insulin resistance) or there is a shortage of insulin (insulin deficiency), blood glucose levels keep rising (**hyperglycemia**). Type 2 diabetes is also associated with high blood pressure and increased cholesterol and blood fat levels.



Gestational (GDM)

GDM consists of high blood glucose levels during pregnancy and may lead to complications for mother and child. GDM usually disappears after pregnancy, but women and their children are at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

Diabetes symptoms

The symptoms of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are similar and include:



Excessive thirst and dry mouth



Frequent urination



Lack of energy



Slow-healing wounds



Blurred vision



Tingling or numbness in hands and feet



Increased hunger



Weight loss



Itching skin



Increased susceptibility to infections

Type 2 diabetes risk factors



Family history of diabetes



Being overweight



Unhealthy diet



Physical inactivity



Increasing age



High blood pressure



Ethnicity



Impaired glucose tolerance (IGT)



History of gestational diabetes



Poor nutrition during pregnancy










Periodontitis (gum disease)



Potential complications of diabetes

Chronic complications include:

-  Vessel disease, leading to a heart attack or stroke
-  Eye problems (retinopathy)
-  Infection or adverse skin conditions
-  Nerve damage (neuropathy)
-  Kidney damage
-  Amputations due to neuropathy or vessel disease
-  Alzheimer's disease








Prevention of diabetes

There's no known prevention for **Type 1** diabetes, but with good management and healthcare support, Type 1 diabetics can lead a normal life.

Type 2 diabetes can mostly be prevented by following a healthy lifestyle. However, over time, most Type 2 diabetics will require oral drugs and/or insulin to keep their blood glucose levels under control..

You can lower your risk of type 2 diabetes if you:

-  Control your weight and manage your diet
-  Exercise regularly
-  Avoid smoking
-  Control your cholesterol levels
-  Maintaining good oral hygiene

If you had **gestational diabetes** or have **prediabetes**, these habits can delay or prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes.



Management of diabetes

Both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are complex conditions requiring a specialised approach and an individualised programme of care.





Sources

www.cdediabetes.co.za

www.idf.org

www.medicinenet.com

www.diabetes.co.uk

www.webmd.com

www.healthline.com

www.intercare.co.za

in @ f ▶