



## WHAT IS DIABETES?

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Diabetes Mellitus is a disorder of metabolism. This means your body is not able to properly use the foods you eat to provide your body with energy. The way your body uses carbohydrates ("carbs") is mainly affected, but the way your body uses fats and proteins is affected as well.

### Is There More Than One Type of Diabetes?

Yes, there are a number of different types. They are: Type 1, Type 2, Gestational Diabetes, and Secondary Diabetes (*which occurs as a result of another illness or medication*).

A brief description of each follows:

#### TYPE 1 DIABETES:

Usually occurs in younger people (*usually less than age 30*) but may occur at any age. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas stops making insulin altogether.

- Symptoms are usually abrupt and severe.
- May have ketones in the urine.
- Require insulin for the rest of their lives.

#### TYPE 2 DIABETES:

Usually occurs in the older, overweight adult (*usually older than age 40*) but may occur at a younger age, and in people who are **not** overweight. The symptoms of Type 2 diabetes may develop slowly over time. In some people, the symptoms are mild and can be easily overlooked. In other people, there might not be any symptoms at all that are usually associated with high blood sugar.

- Symptoms are usually mild or absent.
- Do not usually have ketones in the urine.
- May be controlled with:
- Diet and exercise
- Diet, exercise and oral medication(s)

- Diet, exercise and insulin

OR

- Diet, exercise, and both insulin and oral medication(s).

### **GESTATIONAL DIABETES**

- Onset or discovery of diabetes takes place during pregnancy.
- It usually disappears after birth of the baby, but sometimes does not.
- Usually controlled with diet although it is not unusual for insulin to be necessary.
- Oral medication is not an option during pregnancy.

### **SECONDARY DIABETES**

- Occurs as a result of medication or other illness.
- Treatment is the same as for Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus.
- This type of diabetes may disappear when the underlying problem is corrected or the offending drug is discontinued.

### **What Is Actually Happening In My Body When I have Diabetes?**

Your body uses the glucose (*sugar*) in your blood for energy. However, in order for your body to be able to use that glucose (*which comes from the breakdown of food*), you must have enough insulin available. Insulin helps the glucose move out of your bloodstream and into your cells. When you have diabetes, either you do not have enough insulin or it is not working properly so that glucose builds up in your blood and you have high blood sugar (hyperglycemia). People who don't produce insulin or enough insulin need to take insulin injections or diabetes pills to keep their glucose in balance. Some people can manage their diabetes with a diet and

exercise plan developed with their health care team. Everyone is different. That's why you will need your own diabetes treatment plan to manage your diabetes.

### What Are the Symptoms Of Diabetes?

The most common symptoms are:

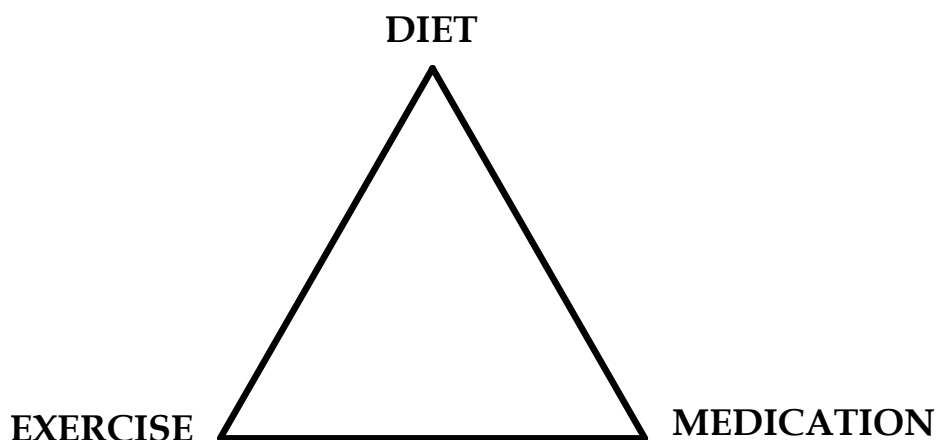
- Thirst or dry mouth
- Tiredness
- Frequent Urination
- Blurred Vision
- Weight loss
- Dry Skin
- Itching
- Slow Healing
- Vaginal Yeast Infections (*in women*)
- Dehydration

In **TYPE 1** you may also have:

- Fatigue
- Hunger
- Nausea
- Abdominal Pain
- Fruity odor to your breath
- Dehydration

All of these symptoms are *temporary* and will gradually improve as your blood sugar improves.

### How Can I control My Blood Sugar?



Keeping your blood sugar in the healthy range will require a lot of work and some life style changes. It may seem overwhelming at times but with help and support

of health care team, you can put diabetes in its place and enjoy rewards of being in control of your health.

Everyone with diabetes needs to follow a *meal plan created specifically for him/her*. This almost always requires the help of a nutritionist. In addition, if you are physically able, exercise is necessary. In some cases, oral medication or insulin will be necessary as well. With the help of the doctor, diabetes educator and nutritionist, all of these factors will be balanced to bring your blood sugar under control.

### **How Will I Know Whether or Not My Blood Sugar Is Controlled?**

Fortunately, there is now a wonderful tool which enables persons with diabetes to check their own blood sugars. It is called Self-Monitoring Blood Glucose (SMBG). Most people call it blood sugar testing. It involves obtaining a small drop of blood usually from your fingertip which you then apply to a special strip which is read by a meter. Your nurse will teach you how to do this test and with your doctor, will help you plan a schedule of testing. You will also discuss what your blood sugar should be before and/or after each meal (*blood sugar goals*) as well as when the results of your testing indicate that you should call your doctor. It is important that you keep your blood sugar as close to normal as possible since we now know that this will decrease the chance of developing complications. If you have Type 1 Diabetes or Gestational Diabetes, you will also be taught how and when to test your urine for ketones and why this is important.

In summary, in order to control your blood sugar, you will learn to balance your food intake, your exercise, and sometimes, medication. This may, at times, seem to be an impossible task. Remember you do not have to do this alone, your diabetes team will help you.

When you are diagnosed with diabetes, it is not unusual to go through a period of mourning. You are mourning the loss of your good health. You may find you go through different stages: you may feel sad, angry, depressed or frightened. You may find that you go back and forth, from one feeling to another. All of these feelings are normal. Eventually, with time, education, and the support of the diabetes team, your family and friends, you will hopefully reach a stage where you can accept the diagnosis and focus on how to best care for yourself. Do not be afraid to discuss how you are feeling with us and your family or friends. If necessary we can have the Social Worker or other therapist speak with you as well

to help you through what may be a difficult time. Even after you go home we are available so call us when you need help or advice!

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