



Type 2 Diabetes

More than 37 million Americans have diabetes (about 1 in 10), and approximately 90-95% of them have type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes most often develops in people over age 45, but more and more [children](#), [teens](#), and young adults are also developing it.

What Causes Type 2 Diabetes?

Insulin is a hormone made by your pancreas that acts like a key to let blood sugar into the cells in your body for use as energy. If you have type 2 diabetes, cells don't respond normally to insulin; this is called [insulin resistance](#). Your pancreas makes more insulin to try to get cells to respond. Eventually your pancreas can't keep up, and your blood sugar rises, setting the stage for [prediabetes](#) and type 2 diabetes. High blood sugar is damaging to the body and can cause other serious health problems, such as [heart disease](#), [vision loss](#), and [kidney disease](#).



Healthy eating is your recipe for managing diabetes.

Symptoms and Risk Factors

Type 2 diabetes [symptoms](#) often develop over several years and can go on for a long time without being noticed (sometimes there aren't any noticeable symptoms at all). Because symptoms can be hard to spot, it's important to know the [risk factors](#) and to see your doctor to get your blood sugar tested if you have any of them.

Testing for Type 2 Diabetes

A [simple blood test](#) will let you know if you have diabetes. If you've gotten your blood sugar tested at a health fair or pharmacy, follow up at a clinic or doctor's office to make sure the results are accurate.

Managing Diabetes

Unlike many health conditions, diabetes is managed mostly by you, with support from your health care team (including your primary care doctor, foot doctor, dentist, eye doctor, registered dietitian nutritionist, diabetes educator, and pharmacist), family, and other important people in your life. Managing diabetes can be challenging, but everything you do to improve your health is worth it!

You may be able to [manage your diabetes](#) with healthy eating and being active, or your doctor may prescribe insulin, other injectable medications, or oral diabetes medicines to help manage your blood sugar and avoid [complications](#). You'll still need to eat healthy and be active if you take insulin or other medicines. It's also important to keep your [blood pressure](#) and [cholesterol](#) close to the targets your doctor sets for you and get necessary screening tests.


You'll need to [check your blood sugar](#) regularly. Ask your doctor how often you should check it and what your target blood sugar levels should be. Keeping your blood sugar levels as close to target as possible will help you prevent or delay diabetes-related complications.

Stress is a part of life, but it can make managing diabetes harder, including managing your blood sugar levels and dealing with daily diabetes care. Regular physical activity, getting enough sleep, and relaxation exercises can help. Talk to your doctor and diabetes educator about these and other ways you can manage stress.

Make regular appointments with your health care team to be sure you're on track with your treatment plan and to get help with new ideas and strategies if needed.

Whether you were just diagnosed with diabetes or have had it for some time, meeting with a diabetes educator is a great way to get support and guidance, including how to:

- Develop a healthy eating and activity plan
- Test your blood sugar and keep a record of the results
- Recognize the signs of high or low blood sugar and what to do about it
- If needed, give yourself insulin by syringe, pen, or pump
- Monitor your feet, skin, and eyes to catch problems early
- Buy diabetes supplies and store them properly
- Manage stress and deal with daily diabetes care

Ask your doctor about [diabetes self-management education and support services](#) and to recommend a diabetes educator, or search the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists' (ADCES) [nationwide directory](#)  for a list of programs in your community.



Type 2 Diabetes in Children and Teens

Childhood obesity rates are rising, and so are the rates of type 2 diabetes in youth. More than 75% of children with type 2 diabetes have a close relative who has it, too. But it's not always because family members are related; it can also be because they share certain habits that can increase their risk. Parents can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes by developing a plan for the whole family:

- Drinking more water and fewer sugary drinks
- Eating more fruits and vegetables
- Making favorite foods healthier
- Making physical activity more fun

Healthy changes become habits more easily when everyone makes them together. Find out how to take charge family style with these [healthy tips](#).

Get Support

Tap into online diabetes communities for encouragement, insights, and support. The American Diabetes Association's [Community page](#)  and ADCES's [Peer Support Resources](#)  are great ways to connect with others who share your experience.

Learn More

- [Living With Diabetes](#)
- [Managing Diabetes: Medicare Coverage and Resources](#)
 [PDF - 1 MB]
- [Diabetes: What Is It? Your Health with Joan Lunden and CDC](#)
- [Diabetes and Prediabetes Articles](#)
- [Infographics](#)

Page last reviewed: December 16, 2021