

# About Diabetes

## What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes mellitus is a group of diseases that affect how the body uses blood sugar (glucose). Glucose provides the body with energy and fuels the brain. Diabetes can lead to excess sugar in the blood, which can lead to serious health problems.



## Types of Diabetes

**Type 1:** Type 1 diabetes often starts during childhood. Symptoms typically come on quickly and are often more severe than Type 2 diabetes.

**Type 2:** Type 2 diabetes can develop at any age but is often diagnosed after age 40. Symptoms may vary depending on how high your blood sugar is. Some people may not have any symptoms.

**Prediabetes:** With prediabetes, your blood sugar is elevated but not at a level high enough to be called diabetes. Prediabetes can be reversible if actions are taken to lower blood sugar levels.

**Gestational Diabetes:** Gestational diabetes happens during pregnancy and often goes away after the baby is born.

## Symptoms of Diabetes

- Excessive thirst
- Frequent urination
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue
- Mood changes and irritability
- Blurry vision
- Slow-healing sores
- Frequent infections
- Ketones in urine

## Are You at Risk?

If you have a family history of diabetes, you may be at increased risk. Additionally, being overweight or obese increases the risk of prediabetes, type 2 diabetes, and gestational diabetes. Race and ethnicity may also increase your risk of developing diabetes. African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian American people are at higher risk of being diagnosed with diabetes.

**Total** health

## Complications

The less controlled your blood sugar is and the longer you have diabetes, the more at risk you are for developing long-term complications. These complications often develop gradually. Some of the possible complications include:

- **Cardiovascular disease** - Diabetes significantly increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, coronary artery disease and narrowing of arteries.
- **Neuropathy** - Neuropathy refers to the nerve damage that may occur as the result of too much sugar in the blood, which damages the tiny blood vessels (capillaries) that provide nutrients to nerves. This may lead to numbness, tingling, burning or pain that often starts at the tips of the fingers or toes and gradually spreads upward.
- **Kidney damage** - Diabetes can cause damage to the tiny blood vessels that filter waste from the blood in the kidneys.
- **Eye damage** - Diabetes can lead to blindness because of damage to the blood vessels of the eye.
- **Foot damage** - Decreased blood flow to the feet can lead to many complications with feet.
- **Skin and mouth conditions** - You may be more prone to skin problems such as bacterial and fungal infections.
- **Alzheimer's disease** - Type 2 diabetes may increase the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
- **Depression** - Depression symptoms are common among people with type 1 or type 2 diabetes.

## Prevention

While type 1 diabetes cannot be prevented, making healthy lifestyle choices can help prevent or even treat prediabetes, gestational diabetes, and type 2 diabetes. These include:

- Eating a healthy diet that is lower in fat and calories and higher in fiber.
- Staying active and getting at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise on most days of the week.
- Maintaining a healthy weight or (if not pregnant) losing weight if you are overweight or obese.

Source: Mayo Clinic ([mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org))