

PSA In Good Health: Diabetes Facts, Statistics, and You!

Diabetes mellitus is a term for a group of disorders that cause elevated blood sugar (glucose) levels in the body. When you eat, your body breaks down carbohydrates into glucose. This triggers the pancreas to release a hormone called insulin. Insulin acts as a “key” that allows glucose to enter the cells from the blood. If your body doesn’t produce enough insulin to effectively manage glucose, it can’t function or perform properly. This produces the symptoms of diabetes.

Statistics

According to the CDC, more than 100 million adults in the United States are living with diabetes or prediabetes. The CDC’s annual report shows that diabetes diagnoses for Americans age 18 and older are increasing, with new diagnoses occurring at about 1.5 million per year. Those numbers were equal for men and women.

Causes and Risk Factors

While factors such as genetics and certain viruses may contribute to this disease, its exact cause is unknown. There’s no current cure or any known prevention, but there are treatments to help manage symptoms. The risk of developing type 2 diabetes increases as you get older. You’re also more likely to develop it if you’ve had gestational diabetes or prediabetes.

Other risk factors include being overweight or having a family history of diabetes. Certain ethnicities (African-Americans, Hispanic/Latino-Americans, Native Americans, Hawaiian/Pacific Islands Americans, Asian-Americans) are at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, too. While you can’t completely eliminate the risk of type 2 diabetes, a healthy diet, weight control, and regular exercise may help prevent it.

Complications

- Blindness
- Kidney failure
- Nervous system damage, or neuropathy
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Digestive problems
- Erectile dysfunction
- Increased risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke
- Amputation of the lower limbs

According to the ADA, diabetes is the seventh-leading cause of death in the United States.

When to See Your Doctor

If you’re older than age 45 and your weight is normal, ask your doctor if diabetes testing is appropriate for you. The American Diabetes Association recommends blood glucose screening if:

- You’re age 45 or older and overweight
- You’re younger than age 45 and overweight, with one or more additional risk factors for type 2 diabetes—such as a sedentary lifestyle or a family history of diabetes

Share your concerns about diabetes prevention with your doctor. He/she will work with you to develop a treatment plan that works for you.

5 Tips for Taking Control in Preventing Diabetes

Making a few simple changes in your lifestyle now may help you avoid the serious health complications of diabetes down the road. Consider the latest diabetes prevention tips from the American Diabetes Association.

- 1. Get More Physical Activity**
Aerobic exercise and resistance training can help you lose weight, lower your blood sugar, and keep your blood sugar within a normal range.
- 2. Get Plenty of Fiber**
Eating foods high in fiber (fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains and nuts) helps reduce your risk of diabetes by improving your blood sugar control. It will also lower your risk for heart disease and promote weight loss by helping you feel full.
- 3. Go for Whole Grains**
Whole grains may reduce your risk of diabetes and help maintain blood sugar levels. Look for the word “whole” on the package and among the first few items in the ingredient list.
- 4. Lose Extra Weight**
If you’re overweight, every pound you lose can improve your health. Participants in one large study who lost a modest amount of weight (around 7 percent of initial body weight) and exercised regularly reduced the risk of developing diabetes by almost 60 percent.
- 5. Skip Fad Diets and Make Healthier Food Choices**
Fad diets may help you lose weight at first, but their effectiveness at preventing diabetes isn’t known, nor are their long-term effects. By excluding or strictly limiting a particular food group, you may be giving up essential nutrients. Instead, make variety and portion control part of your healthy-eating plan.