

About Diabetes

National Diabetes Education Program

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a serious disease. It means that your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. Having too much glucose in your blood is not healthy. There are different types of diabetes:

- With **type 1 diabetes**, your body cannot make insulin. You need insulin to use the food you eat for energy. With this type of diabetes, you need to get insulin from shots or a pump. Your genes and other factors may cause a person to get type 1 diabetes.
- With **type 2 diabetes**, your body cannot use the insulin it makes. Teens are more likely to get type 2 if they weigh too much, are not active, or have a family member with diabetes. You are also more likely to get diabetes if you are a Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, African American, Asian American or Pacific Islander.
- **Gestational diabetes** is a type of diabetes that some women get when they are pregnant. It increases the chances of both the mother and her child getting diabetes later on.

Why should I take care of my diabetes?

If you take care of your diabetes, you will feel better, will have more energy, and can lower your risk for other health problems. Many people with diabetes have high blood pressure and high cholesterol—these can harm blood vessels and cause heart attacks or strokes. Too high blood glucose can damage your eyes and kidneys and cause problems with your toes or feet, and your gums or teeth. The good news is that when you take care of your diabetes you can avoid or reduce these problems.



What can I do to take care of my diabetes?

The key to taking care of your diabetes is to keep your blood glucose as close to normal as you can. Your doctor will tell you what blood glucose level is right for you. Your doctor will teach you how to check your blood glucose with a glucose meter.

Learn what makes your blood glucose too high or too low.

- Carbohydrates, or carbs for short, are a good source of energy for our bodies. But if you eat too many at one time, they make your blood glucose get too high. Good carb choices are whole grain foods, nonfat or low-fat milk, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Being sick and stress make your blood glucose go up too.
- Insulin or pills and being active help to lower your blood glucose. If you weigh too much, losing weight can bring your blood glucose down too.

Take care of your diabetes to live a long and healthy life and do all the things your friends do.

✓ **Make healthy food choices**

- Choose fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, low-fat meats, low-fat or skim milk and cheese, whole grain or brown rice, and beans.
- Eat breakfast, lunch, dinner, and one or two snacks. Try to eat at the same time each day.
- Baked, broiled, or grilled choices are best - remove skin and all the fat you see.
- Use small amounts of oil and low-fat margarine, salad dressing, and mayo.
- Avoid butter, fatty meats (like bacon and hot dogs), and fried foods.
- Choose snacks wisely. Try fresh fruit, or one slice low-fat cheese and 5-6 crackers.

✓ **Be active**

- Play basketball or soccer, ride a bike, or go for a brisk walk.
- Be active for 60 minutes every day. You can break it up into 20 minutes, three times a day.
- Keep TV and computer time to less than two hours each day.

✓ **Be at a healthy weight**

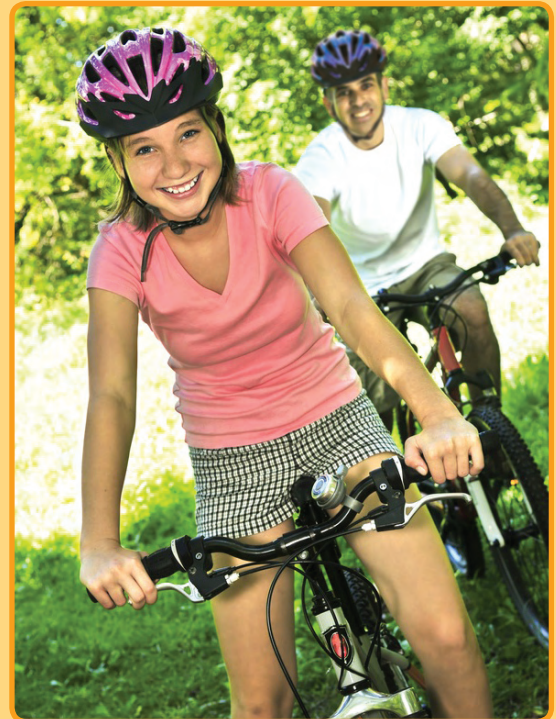
- Eat small servings of food and be active. This can help with your blood glucose control and prevent weight gain.
- Ask your doctor what a healthy weight is for you.

✓ **Take your medicine**

- Teens with type 1 need insulin. Teens with type 2 diabetes may need to take insulin or pills.
- Make sure to take your medicine as instructed every day.

✓ **Check your blood glucose**

- Learn how to check your blood glucose at home with a meter. Your doctor will teach you how and tell you what your blood glucose should be.



Visit...

National Diabetes Education Program to learn more and get free copies of other tip sheets for teens.

www.YourDiabetesInfo.org • 1-888-693-NDEP (6337)

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