

Healthy Living: Diabetes¹

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What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which the body has difficulty either making or using the hormone insulin. Insulin controls the amount of glucose (sugar) in our blood by telling our cells how much glucose to take in from the bloodstream. When the body cannot make or use insulin properly, blood glucose levels rise. Controlling blood glucose reduces risk of health complications.

Health Complications of High Blood Glucose

Having high blood glucose over a long period of time can result in vision loss or blindness, high blood pressure, heart disease, damage to blood vessels and nerves in your hands and feet, and kidney damage.



Figure 1. People with diabetes should regularly check their blood glucose levels, carefully select the foods in their diet, and maintain a healthy weight.

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What are the symptoms of diabetes?

Visit your doctor if you have any of the following:

- A need to urinate often (even at night)
- Persistent thirst or extreme hunger
- Unintentional weight loss
- Dry or itchy skin

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- Skin infections
- Slow healing of cuts
- Numbness or tingling in feet or hands
- Blurry vision

Can diabetes be cured?

In most diabetes cases, there is no cure. However, diabetes can be controlled with an appropriate treatment plan. Some people control their diabetes with a proper diet and regular exercise. Others may also need oral diabetes medication or insulin injections.

HOW DO I MANAGE MY DIABETES?

- Monitor your blood glucose.
- Be physically active every day.
- Follow a healthy diet by eating less fat, sweets, and sodium, and choosing foods with fiber.*
- Have your eyes, urine, blood pressure, blood glucose, and blood lipids (fats) checked regularly.
- Have a health professional check your feet at least once a year, and check them yourself every day.
- Have your teeth cleaned at least twice a year.
- Do not smoke.

*If you have diabetes, a registered dietitian (RD) can design a diet plan that is right for you.



Figure 2. Regular physical activity contributes to both prevention and management of diabetes.
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