

World Health Day April 7 “Diabetes”

The highs and lows



“In 2012, an estimated 1.5 million deaths were directly caused by diabetes.”

World Health Organization, 2015*

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease that develops when the body either doesn't produce enough insulin, or the cells don't react properly to insulin. This can lead to an excess of sugar in the blood. Insulin is a hormone secreted by an organ called pancreas and regulates the sugar content in blood.

Type 1 diabetes

Sometimes called insulin-dependent, juvenile or childhood diabetes. People with this type don't produce enough insulin and need to take insulin daily to live.

Symptoms of type 1 diabetes:

- Increased thirst, hunger, urination and tiredness
- Weight loss
- Blurred vision

These symptoms occur suddenly.

Type 2 diabetes

Sometimes called adult onset diabetes. The body of a person with this type of diabetes can't effectively use insulin. 90% of all people with diabetes have type 2.

Type 2 is a preventable form of diabetes.

Symptoms of type 2 diabetes:

The person may not have symptoms. They may experience some symptoms similar to type 1, such as thirst, and increased volume and frequency of urination, but these are less distinct. Disease may often be diagnosed once complications start.

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes you can change:

- **Overweight**
- **Physical inactivity/ lack of exercise**
Exercise helps maintain a healthy weight, and helps the body's cells use insulin effectively
- **Unhealthy diet**
Another factor in managing weight as well as blood sugar
- **Tobacco use**
Smoking can increase blood sugar levels and decrease the body's ability to use insulin
- **High blood pressure or cholesterol**
Both increase diabetes risk. If you have these conditions, get them under control. If you do not have these conditions, take steps to protect yourself against developing them

Pre-diabetes: A warning sign

Pre-diabetes is when you have high blood sugar, but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. It is also called borderline diabetes.

There are no symptoms for pre-diabetes...

- Each year up to 30% of people with pre-diabetes will go on to develop type 2 diabetes
- Almost everyone with type 2 diabetes had pre-diabetes first – but most didn't know it
- Diagnosis is made through testing - “impaired glucose tolerance” or “impaired fasting glucose”
- Managing blood sugar levels can prevent or at least delay the onset of type 2 diabetes
- If you have pre-diabetes, damage to blood vessels might already be occurring

Pre-diabetes is reversible

Pre-diabetes is a medical condition that can be treated, even reversed! Lifestyle change is the most effective. These changes include diet, weight loss and exercise.

Gestational diabetes

This is a condition that may occur during pregnancy when blood sugar levels are higher than usual but less than diabetic levels. Women with gestational diabetes have a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the future.

Long-term effects of diabetes

Impaired vision	Can progress to blindness
Nerve damage	Tingling numbness or weakness especially hands and feet; Digestion may get affected
Foot ulcers	Can lead to amputation
Kidney damage	Diabetes is one of the main causes of kidney failure
Heart and blood vessels	50% of all diabetics die from heart disease or stroke
Skin infections	Diabetes makes skin more susceptible to bacterial and fungal infections

Speak to your doctor today if you are worried, have one or more risk factors, pregnant or over 45 and get tested!

*Source: World Health Organization, *Diabetes Fact Sheet No.312*, January 2015

Disclaimer: This leaflet has been developed for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Should you have questions or concerns about any topic described here, please consult your medical professional.

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