



Diabetes News

Diabetes is a major health problem for women. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) reports that, approximately 9.1 million women in the U.S. have diabetes. One third of these women may not even realize they have the condition. Women with diabetes are at a serious risk of developing heart disease. Women with diabetes are also more likely to have other problems such as eye disease, amputations, vaginal infections, kidney disease, and complications with pregnancy.

According to the ADA, there are three main types of diabetes in women. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the body cannot produce insulin. This type of diabetes is usually diagnosed during childhood or young adulthood. Type 2 diabetes occurs in adults whose bodies cannot produce enough insulin or whose body cells reject the insulin that is produced. A condition called “pre-diabetes” often occurs before people develop type 2 diabetes. A sign of pre-diabetes is a blood sugar level that is higher than normal, but not high enough to diagnose type 2 diabetes. Gestational diabetes is the third main type of diabetes. It occurs when a woman who has not had diabetes before develops high blood sugar levels while pregnant.

The ADA reports that the most common form of diabetes is type 2 diabetes. About 90 to 95 percent of people with diabetes have type 2. This form of diabetes usually develops in adults age 40 and older and is most common in adults over age 55. About 80 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight. Type 2 diabetes is often part of a metabolic syndrome that includes obesity, elevated blood pressure, and high levels of blood fats.

Symptoms of Diabetes

According to the ADA, the symptoms of type 2 diabetes develop gradually. Common symptoms of diabetes may include fatigue or nausea, frequent urination, unusual thirst, weight loss, blurred vision, frequent infections, and slow healing of wounds or sores. Some people have no symptoms at all. The ADA recommends that everyone over age 45 should be tested for diabetes every 3 years and that people at higher risk (see below) should be tested at a younger age (often starting at age 20) and should be tested every year. There is also more concern for children developing type 2 diabetes because more and more children are overweight. Ask your doctor about testing for diabetes.



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Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes develops only during pregnancy. According to the ADA, it occurs more often in African Americans, American Indians, Hispanic Americans, and people with a family history of diabetes. The ADA reports that this type of diabetes usually disappears after delivery, but the mother is at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life and with any future pregnancies.

Are You at Risk for Diabetes?

According to the ADA, the risk factors for diabetes may include the following:

- Family history of diabetes
- Overweight (20 lbs. or more)
- Lack of adequate exercise
- Over 40 years of age
- Have high blood pressure
- Being Latino, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or African American
- Past history of gestational diabetes (Women Only)
- Delivery of a child weighing over 9 lbs. at birth
- Being female
- Having high total cholesterol or triglycerides

What can I do?

The ADA reports that even a small weight loss (10% of your current weight) can help reduce your risk of developing diabetes and other diseases. It is important to discuss exercise guidelines with your physician prior to beginning an exercise program. The ADA also notes that exercise can reduce your risk of many diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. It also is key to maintaining a healthy weight and essential to any weight loss program.

More Help for Controlling Diabetes

The ADA believes that many health risks related to diabetes can be controlled with a healthy diet. Because managing your diabetes is very important to your health, you may need to have special medical nutrition therapy by a qualified health professional. A registered dietitian or a certified diabetes educator as well as your doctor are qualified health professionals. Ask your physician about additional education and training for diabetes.

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