

# Understanding type 1 diabetes

Despite the prevalence of diabetes, many people may not be entirely sure what the disease entails. While it's true that diet and exercise are vital to reducing risk for diabetes, some people are born with the disease. In fact, for individuals with type 1 diabetes, the condition is one they must manage throughout their lives.

## What is diabetes?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines diabetes as a long-lasting health condition that affects how the body turns food into energy. When a person eats food, much of that food is broken down into glucose and released into the bloodstream. Under normal conditions, when blood sugar levels rise, the pancreas will release insulin, which unlocks the abilities of that blood sugar so the body's

cells can use it for energy. Individuals with diabetes do not make enough insulin or can't use the insulin as they should. Cells sometimes stop responding to insulin. In each of these instances, too much blood sugar stays in the bloodstream, leading to serious health problems.

## Types of diabetes

Doctors have identified three main types of diabetes: Type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes. About 90 to 95 percent of people with diabetes have type 2, which is when the body doesn't use insulin well, says the CDC. Typically, a healthy lifestyle or lifestyle changes can help prevent type 2 diabetes. Gestational diabetes is an often temporary form of diabetes that occurs during pregnancy. Type 1 diabetes, though rare, may be most concerning because it

is thought to be an autoimmune condition. Also, it must be managed throughout life.

## Type 1 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is a chronic condition that occurs because the pancreas produces little or no insulin. Very often it appears during childhood or adolescence, which is why it was once known as juvenile diabetes. Some experts think the body attacks itself by mistake, resulting in the body's cessation of insulin production.

Type 1 diabetes has no cure. Treatments are designed to manage blood sugar levels and prevent complications. Over time, type 1 diabetes complications can affect major organs like the eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart. That is why moderating blood sugar levels is crucial.

Most type 1 diabetes patients try to balance their bodies' glucose and insulin de-

mands through measured diets, testing and daily insulin injections. The American Diabetes Association says diabetes technology continues to evolve, and blood glucose meters and continuous glucose monitoring systems have made testing more convenient and comfortable. CGMs work through a sensor placed on the skin. They monitor and report on glucose in real time and alert when the glucose rises or lowers to certain predetermined limits. They are often preferred by those with type 1 diabetes to reduce finger pricks throughout the day. Furthermore, insulin pumps and other devices are easier to use and less invasive. They can deliver insulin continuously to keep levels even.

Type 1 diabetes must be carefully managed to promote good health. With education, most people can live comfortably with diabetes.

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