What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a serious health condition that affects how your body makes or uses insulin (a hormone that controls blood sugar). With diabetes, your body has trouble keeping your blood sugar at normal levels.

Diabetes can lead to blindness, kidney failure, nerve damage, lower limb loss, or early death from heart disease and stroke.

Making lifestyle changes can lower your risk of diabetes and improve your overall health.

Types of Diabetes

Diabetes can develop over years and is more common as you get older. The three most common types are:

- **Type 1** occurs when your body doesn’t make enough insulin.
- **Type 2** is the most common type and occurs when your body can’t use insulin properly. About one in five adults with this type don’t know they have it.
- **Gestational** diabetes occurs during pregnancy and increases the risk of health issues for you and your baby. This type usually goes away after delivery, but can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes later in life.

Managing Diabetes

- **Common risks** for developing diabetes include if you are 45 and older; have overweight, obesity or a family history of diabetes; or are physically inactive. Where people live, learn, work and grow up can also affect their risk for developing diabetes.

- **Symptoms** of diabetes can include frequent urination, thirst or hunger; blurry vision; numbness or tingling in your hands or feet; fatigue and dry skin; or sores and cuts that heal slowly. However, many people with diabetes do not experience symptoms.

Lifestyle changes can help prevent, delay and manage diabetes. You can:

- Eat more whole foods like fruits and vegetables, and fewer processed foods. Visit [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) for tips.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- Quit smoking.
- Increase exercise by moving more and sitting less.
- Keep a healthy weight.
Taking Care

Visit nyc.gov/health and search for healthy eating to read the Guide to Healthy Eating and Active Living in NYC for tips on how to set lifestyle change goals.

Get support for quitting smoking: Visit the New York State Smokers’ Quitline at nysmokefree.com or call 866-697-8487.

Get care for mental health challenges: Visit nyc.gov/nycwell or call 888-692-9355.

Call 311 for help if you have trouble paying for food, housing, health care or medicine.

Resources

Connect   @nychealth  nychealth  @nychealth  nychealth  nyc health

Learn More  Visit nyc.gov/health or cdc.gov and search for diabetes.

Receive the Latest Health Bulletins  Email healthbulletins@health.nyc.gov.