

Healthy Living: Diabetes ¹

Linda B. Bobroff, Karla P. Shelnutt, and Paulina Wittkowsky²

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which the body has difficulty making or using insulin. Insulin is a hormone that controls the amount of glucose (sugar) in our blood. When a person has diabetes, the body makes no insulin, too little insulin, or the insulin it makes does not work right. This results in high blood glucose.

What happens if my blood glucose is high?



Over time, high blood glucose can lead to vision loss or even blindness. It also can harm your kidneys, blood vessels, and nerves. People with diabetes have a higher chance of developing high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease.

Am I at risk for diabetes?

Factors that may increase your risk of developing diabetes are as follows.

Heredity – If one of your parents, grandparents, or siblings had diabetes, you are more likely to have the disease.

Age – Your body makes less insulin as you age.

Race – If you are Hispanic, African American, American Indian, or Asian American, you have a higher risk of developing diabetes.

Gestational diabetes – If you had diabetes while you were pregnant or if you gave birth to a baby weighing nine pounds or more, you have a greater risk of developing the disease later in life.

Obesity – Weighing more than is healthy for your height increases your chance of developing diabetes.

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2. Linda B. Bobroff, PhD, RD, LD/N, professor; Karla P. Shelnutt, PhD, RD, assistant professor; Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences; University of Florida; Gainesville, FL 32611; and Paulina Wittkowsky, MS, RD, formerly with the University of Florida.

What is a healthy weight for me?

People with a large amount of body fat, especially around their waist, are at risk for diseases such as diabetes. Use this chart to see if your body weight places you at risk for diabetes.

Height	Healthy Weight (lbs)	Obese (lbs)
5'0"	110 - 140	160 - 180
5'2"	115 - 145	165 - 185
5'4"	120 - 150	170 - 190
5'6"	125 - 155	175 - 195
5'8"	130 - 160	180 - 200
5'10"	135 - 165	185 - 205
6'0"	140 - 170	190 - 210
6'2"	145 - 175	195 - 215

For more specific information, see the latest version of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans at <http://www.myplate.gov/guidelines/index.html>.

How do I know if I have diabetes?

Millions of Americans have diabetes, and about one-fourth of them don't know it! People with diabetes may have different symptoms. They may experience all, some, or none of the following:

- § A need to urinate often (even at night)
- § Constant thirst or hunger
- § Weight loss that cannot be explained
- § Dry or itchy skin
- § Skin infections
- § Slow healing of cuts
- § Numbness or tingling in feet or hands
- § Blurry vision



A doctor can determine if you have diabetes. If you have any of the above symptoms,

visit your doctor and find out! The sooner you know that you have diabetes, the sooner you can take charge of your condition. This will help you feel better and lower your risk for health complications.

Can diabetes be cured?

In most cases of diabetes, there is no cure. But diabetes can be controlled. Controlling diabetes means keeping your blood glucose as close to normal as possible. Your doctor will tell you your target for blood glucose control.

Some people can achieve their blood glucose goal with a proper diet and regular exercise. Many people also need oral medication or insulin injections to reach their goals. By controlling your blood glucose, you reduce your risk of health complications.

How can I control diabetes?

- § Keep your blood glucose under control.
- § Lose weight, if you are overweight.
- § Be physically active every day.
- § Take medications as prescribed.
- § Have your eyes and your blood pressure checked regularly.
- § Have a health professional check your feet at least once a year; check them yourself every day.
- § Don't smoke!
- § Follow a healthy diet.
- § Have your teeth cleaned and checked at least twice a year.



