

# Healthy Living: Diabetes<sup>1</sup>

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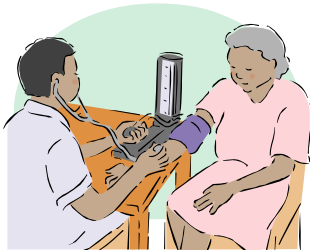


## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which the body has trouble 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 insulin that does not work right. This results in high blood glucose.

## What happens if I have high blood glucose?

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?

Some factors that may increase your risk of developing diabetes are:

- ❖ **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 gave birth to a baby weighing nine pounds or more, you have a greater risk of developing the disease later in life.

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❖ **Obesity:** Weighing more than is healthy for your height increases your chance of developing diabetes.



**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 you are above a healthy weight for your height. For more specific information, see the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005.

Height	Healthy Weight (lbs)	Overweight (lbs)
5'	97 to 123	128 to 148
5'2"	104 to 131	136 to 158
5'4"	110 to 140	145 to 169
5'6"	118 to 148	155 to 179
5'8"	125 to 158	164 to 190
5'10"	132 to 167	174 to 202
6'	140 to 177	184 to 213
6'2"	148 to 186	194 to 225

**How do I know if I have diabetes?**

Millions of Americans have diabetes, and half of them don't even 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.

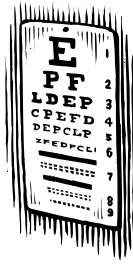
**Can diabetes be cured?**

In most cases of diabetes, there is no cure. But diabetes can be controlled. Controlling diabetes means keeping your blood glucose at a normal level. You can do this with a proper diet and regular exercise. Some people also may need oral medication or insulin injections. 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.

→ Have your eyes and your blood pressure checked regularly.

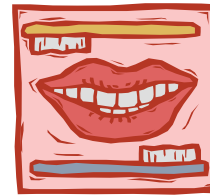


→ Have a health professional check your feet at least once a year; check them yourself every day.

→ Don't smoke!

→ Have your teeth cleaned and checked at least twice a year.

→ Follow a healthy diet.



### What is a healthy diet?

- Low in fat, saturated and *trans* fat.
- Choose foods with fiber, such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- Eat fewer concentrated sweets, such as sugar, honey, candy, regular soft drinks and sweet tea.
- Cut down on foods high in salt and sodium.
- Before you drink alcohol, ask your health care provider for advice.

If you have diabetes, a registered dietitian (RD) can design an eating plan that is right for you.

**To learn more about diabetes, or resources available related to aging, contact one or more of these resources:**

**American Diabetes Association**

Toll free 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) (available in English and Spanish).

**A registered dietitian (RD)**

You can find an RD in your area through The American Dietetic Association at their toll free number, 1-800-366-1655 (available in English and Spanish). Web site:

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

**Your local county Extension agent**

Look for “Cooperative Extension Service” in the blue pages of your telephone book; in Florida you can find your county Extension office at the University of Florida IFAS Extension Web site: <http://extension.ifas.ufl.edu>

**Your local Area Agency on Aging**

May be listed in the Business section in your telephone book; in Florida find your local Area Agency on Aging at the Florida Department of Elder Affairs Web site:

<http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us>

**USDA and USDHHS. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005***

Available at: <http://www.usda.gov/cnpp>