

Diabetes – What Diabetes Is

Before you learn about diabetes, you need to learn about carbohydrates and sugar. Carbohydrates are found in many of the foods you eat. Carbohydrates break down into sugar in your body.

Why do I need sugar?

Sugar gives you energy to do all the things you do each day.

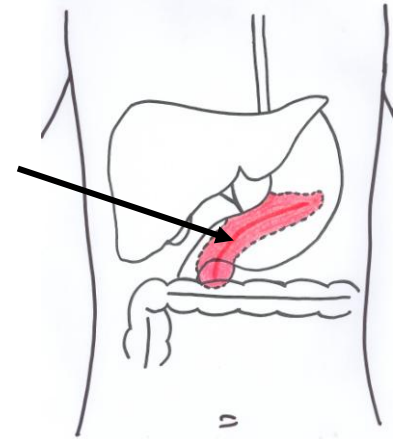
You need sugar to:

- walk and work
- laugh and think
- and much more

You get sugar from food you eat and drink. Your blood carries the sugar to all parts of your body and goes into your cells with the help of insulin.

What is insulin?

Insulin comes from the pancreas. The pancreas is an organ behind your stomach. Insulin helps you use the sugar in your blood to make energy. Without insulin, your body cannot use the food you eat.



What is diabetes?

You have diabetes when there is too much sugar in your blood. The sugar from the food you eat and drink stays in your blood instead of going into your cells due to a lack of insulin. The cells cannot use the energy from the food. You may begin to feel run down or tired.

What is Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas does not produce any insulin. If you have Type 1 diabetes you must get your insulin by injection. You also need to follow a healthy eating pattern and be active.

Type 2 diabetes occurs when your pancreas does not produce enough insulin or when your body does not use insulin very well. With Type 2 diabetes, you need to follow a healthy eating pattern. You may also need to take oral medication or insulin and be active.

What causes diabetes?

The cause of diabetes is not clear. We do know that eating too many sweet foods does not cause diabetes.

Researchers think that Type 1 diabetes is an auto-immune problem. This means your body's natural defense system is not working right. It may attack the healthy cells that produce insulin.

Type 2 diabetes often runs in families. Your lifestyle, activity, weight, age, and other medical problems may also increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

Is there a cure for diabetes?

Diabetes cannot be cured. It can be controlled by following a healthy eating pattern, making sure you are active and taking medication when prescribed.

How will I learn to look after my diabetes?

Many members of the health care team will help you learn what you need to know:

- diabetes educators
- dietitians
- doctors and nurses
- pharmacists
- social workers
- exercise therapists

We work together with you, your family and friends. Please feel free to ask questions and we will help you.