

# The Wellness News

Issue 23, September 2009



## Diabetes Prevention

### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a serious disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. The body needs insulin so that food can be converted into energy—without it, sugar or glucose from food cannot enter the body's cells and as a result builds up in the blood (known as high blood glucose). The cause of diabetes is not completely understood, but both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles. The cause of the disease is also related to the type of diabetes that a person has.

**There are two primary forms of the disease—Type I and Type II.**

**Type I:** *insulin-dependent diabetes or juvenile onset diabetes.* In this type of diabetes, the pancreas does not make enough insulin and people with this condition must take insulin every day. The onset of type I diabetes most commonly occurs in children and young adults. Type I diabetes is thought to be an autoimmune response that causes the insulin producing cells in the pancreas to die. This type of diabetes is not considered to be preventable.

**Type II:** *non-insulin-dependent diabetes or adult onset diabetes.* In this form, the pancreas usually produces adequate amounts of insulin but the body can't use it effectively. People with this type of the disease do not usually need to take insulin (or they take less of it than those with Type I), but they do need to control their diabetes very carefully

through diet, exercise and sometimes medication. This form of diabetes usually begins in adults and is the most common form of diabetes in the United States. There are many lifestyle factors you can change to help prevent the disease.

### Symptoms:

Sometimes people have no symptoms of diabetes for many years. When symptoms do start to become noticeable the most common indicators of the disease are: frequent urination, excessive thirst, unexplained weight loss, extreme hunger, vomiting, vision changes, very dry skin, feeling tired, slow wound healing, tingling in hands and feet, and more infections than usual.

**Diabetes affects more than 20.8 million Americans. Everyone over 45 should have their blood glucose checked at least every 3 years; however, regular testing of random blood glucose should begin at a younger age.**

# The Wellness News

More...

## Preventive Steps

### Tip 1: Be active!

The benefits of regular physical activity extend beyond weight loss. Even if it doesn't produce weight loss, physical activity lowers blood sugar and increases your sensitivity to insulin, which helps keep your blood sugar within a healthy range. Both aerobic exercise (walking, bicycling, swimming, etc) and resistance training (weight lifting, exercise bands, etc) can help prevent diabetes, but it is most beneficial to regularly engage in a combination of both.

### Tip 2: Eat fiber daily

Fiber may lower the risk of diabetes by improving your blood glucose control. It may even encourage weight loss by helping you feel full at the end of a meal. Foods high in fiber include fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds.

### Tip 3: Choose whole grains

Whole grains may reduce your risk of diabetes and help maintain blood sugar levels. Try to get at least half your grains from whole grains. Look for the word "whole" on the package and be sure it is among the first few items in the ingredient list. Some whole grain foods include whole wheat bread and pasta, oatmeal and barley.

### Tip 4: Lose extra weight

If you're carrying excess weight, you can significantly reduce your risk for diabetes by losing weight. One study showed that overweight adults who lost a modest amount of weight — 5% to 10% of initial body weight — and exercised regularly reduced the risk of developing diabetes by 58% over three years.

## Risk Factors for type II diabetes

- Age: 40 or older
- Obesity or Overweight
- Lack of physical activity
- Family members with Type II diabetes
- History of gestational diabetes
- History of impaired glucose tolerance
- Race: Black, Hispanic, Native-American, Asian-American or Pacific Islander
- Polycystic ovary syndrome



**Call Your Health Coach for More Information 1-800-433-2320**

Sources: American Diabetes Association, National Institutes of Health, Mayo Clinic

