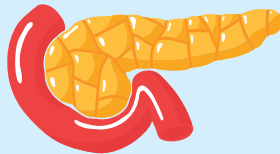


What is Diabetes?

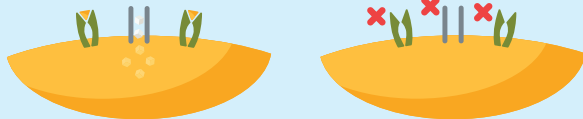
► Diabetes is growing at an epidemic rate in the United States. People with diabetes can take steps to control the disease and lower their risk for complications.



Diabetes is a disease that affects how your body turns food into energy. Most of the food you eat turns into glucose, the main source of fuel for your body, and enters the bloodstream. For the glucose to go into the cells, a hormone called **insulin** must be present. Insulin is produced in a gland called the **pancreas**.



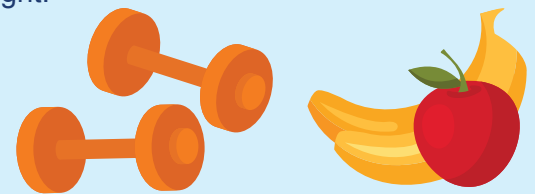
When the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin, or the body doesn't use the insulin properly, this is known as **insulin resistance**. Without insulin, glucose (fuel) can't enter the cells. Glucose levels rising in the bloodstream refers to **hyperglycemia** (high blood glucose).



People aged 40 years and older and those who are overweight are more likely to develop diabetes. The incidence of type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents is growing. Diabetes is more common among people in certain ethnic groups, such as Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans.



People diagnosed with diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) are more likely to develop diabetes late in life. Individuals who have or have had gestational diabetes should exercise at least 30 minutes 5 times a week, eat a healthy diet and, if overweight, lose 5-7 percent of their body weight.



WHO GETS DIABETES?

There are currently about 34.2 million people in the United States with diabetes, and 12.0 million of those people are in Alabama. Some people are more likely to develop diabetes based on certain risk factors, including:

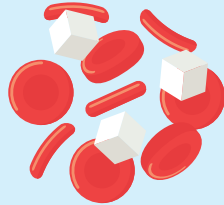
- obesity
- eating plan
- physical inactivity
- heredity (relatives with diabetes)
- increased age
- smoking
- alcohol



Diabetes is not caused by eating too much sugar; however, lifestyle behavior does contribute to your risk. People who are inactive, obese or who overeat will more than likely get diabetes at any age. The good news is that you can help prevent diabetes by achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and being more active. Your healthy meal plan will allow you to eat all foods in the correct amounts and in moderation. It's particularly important that you monitor your blood sugar after eating.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE DIABETES?

- Get regular checkups and follow instructions from your healthcare provider.
- Monitor your blood glucose levels daily. Aim for glucose levels in an acceptable range.



- Eat a diet low in fat and cholesterol to lower your risk for heart disease.
- Achieve and maintain a reasonable weight.
- Get regular eye checkups.
- Inspect your feet daily.
- Follow an exercise plan as approved by your doctor. Regular exercise has been shown to improve blood glucose levels and help achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

- Follow a healthy eating plan recommended by your healthcare provider. Eating well-balanced meals in the correct amounts plays an important role in managing your diabetes.
- Take your medication as prescribed by your healthcare provider.



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