

Diabetes

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We all know that obesity is a growing concern, and there are many health issues that can arise from being overweight. One of these major health concerns today is diabetes. Diabetes is a disorder affecting the process in which we break down the foods we eat. Once food is consumed, it is broken down into glucose. Glucose is the form of sugar in the blood, and must enter cells in our body to be used for energy. Insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas, must be present for this to occur. For those unaffected by diabetes, the pancreas automatically produces the appropriate amount of insulin. For individuals who are diabetic, the production of insulin is effected or the cells do not respond appropriately to the insulin that is produced. Because of this, glucose builds up in the blood and is useless as an energy source.

The distinction between Type 1, Type 2, and gestational diabetes is based on the amount of insulin that is produced and how it is used in the body.

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease, resulting in the immune system attacking other tissues within the body. With this, the insulin-producing cells located in the pancreas are no longer functional, causing little to no insulin to be produced. Type 1 diabetes accounts for approximately 5-10% of diabetes diagnoses in the United States. It commonly appears in childhood and requires life long monitoring with daily insulin treatments.

Type 2 diabetes is present in over 90% of all diabetics. With this condition, the pancreas produces insulin, however the body is insulin resistant and cannot use it properly. Over time the insulin production decreases and then results in the build up of glucose. Type 2 diabetes is characterized by older age, obesity, poor eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle. This usually can be remedied with healthy eating and exercise.

Gestational Diabetes occurs during pregnancy, as a result of hormonal changes in the body. Characterized by high blood glucose (sugar), gestational diabetes occurs during the later stages of pregnancy and ends with the birth of the child.

Diabetes is a rising epidemic in the United States – a staggering 90 to 95% of the population diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes is obese. One in three people are at risk of acquiring Type 2 diabetes, and the at risk age window is dropping to adolescents as young as 12 years old. The American Diabetes Association has studies showing from 1980 to 2003 that the rate of patients with diabetes has risen approximately 61% and is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States.

Life threatening problems that may occur with Type 2 diabetes include heart attack, stroke, blindness and kidney failure, along with damage to the nervous

system causing impairment of the cardiac and gastrointestinal systems, and the distal extremities (hands and feet). Having damage to the nervous system in the feet can lead to amputation and is estimated to happen to 86,000 diabetics per year in the United States alone.

What can you do to prevent the risk of Type 2 diabetes?

- Make an appointment with your Doctor's office to get a check up on your health status.
- Ask about seeing a dietician to help you develop a healthy diet.
- Ask for a physical therapy referral to help you design a safe exercise program, specific to your health needs and goals.

With the price of gas these days and the nice weather, walking is cheap and is great for getting your cardiovascular and metabolic system going on the right track!