

# Diabetes

## What is Diabetes?

In people with diabetes, blood glucose levels are higher than normal because the body either does not produce enough insulin or cannot use insulin properly. The body needs insulin to turn the food we eat into energy. In Australia, the number of new cases of diabetes each year would fill the Melbourne Cricket ground, approximately 275 people develop diabetes each day.

## Types of Diabetes

- **Type 1-** is the least common form, usually affecting children and young adults but can occur at any age. It is an auto-immune disease that occurs when the pancreas cannot produce enough insulin as it has been destroyed by the body's own immune system.
- **Type 2** - is a lifestyle disease affecting 85–90% of all cases. While adults are usually affected, younger people even children are now getting this lifestyle disease. The pancreas makes insulin, but does not work as well as it should and upsets the balance of glucose in the body. Type 2 diabetes can be delayed and even prevented in up to 60% of cases by adopting a healthy diet and active lifestyle.



## What actually goes wrong?

- The body needs a special sugar called glucose as its main source of fuel or energy. The body makes glucose from foods containing carbohydrate such as breads breakfast cereals, rice, pasta, potatoes and milk products.
- The glucose is carried around the body in the blood and the glucose level is called glycaemia (glyc = glucose; aemia = in the blood). The glucose level must be neither too high nor too low, but just right.
- The glucose running around in the blood stream now has to get out of the blood and into the body tissues. It is the cells in the body tissues that actually do the work – brain cells so you can think, heart cells so you can pump blood and muscle cells so you can walk. Glucose is also stored in the liver, like you would store food items in the kitchen pantry.

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- This is where insulin enters the story. Insulin is a hormone made by the pancreas, a gland sitting just below the stomach. Insulin opens the doors (the glucose channels) that let glucose go from the blood to the body cells where energy is made. This process is called glucose metabolism.
- In diabetes, the pancreas either cannot make insulin or the insulin it does make is not enough and cannot work properly.
- Without insulin doing its job, the glucose channels are shut. Glucose builds up in the blood leading to high blood glucose levels which cause the health problems linked to diabetes.

## **Type 2 Diabetes can be prevented by up to 60%**

- By maintaining a healthy weight
- Being physically active
- Following a healthy eating plan



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