

# Understanding **Type 2 Diabetes**

## What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a health condition that causes blood glucose (also called blood sugar) levels to rise higher than normal. Hyperglycemia is the term health care providers use to describe high blood glucose.

When you eat, your body breaks food down into glucose and sends it into the blood. Insulin, a hormone made in your pancreas, helps move the glucose from your blood into your blood cells as fuel for energy.

There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes (diabetes you develop when you're pregnant).

## What is Type 2 Diabetes?

In type 2 diabetes, your body has trouble using the insulin it's making. This is called insulin resistance and it causes your blood glucose to rise higher than normal. At first, your body makes more insulin to make up for this. But over time, it is unable to keep your blood glucose levels in a normal range. When blood glucose levels stay high for long periods of time, it increases your risk of other problems like cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, blindness, and nerve pain.

## What Treatments Are Used for Type 2 Diabetes?

- Oral medications
- Insulin
- Non-insulin injectables

The goal of treatment is to help you feel good and prevent problems caused over time by high blood glucose. To meet these goals, your health care team will work with you to create a care plan that includes lifestyle changes and medications. Your care plan will help you reach your treatment goals. The best way to reach these goals is to:

- Have an eating plan that meets your needs. What you eat, how much you eat, and when you eat are all important.
- Stay physically active and get regular exercise.
- Take your medications (pills and/or injected medications) as prescribed by your health care provider.

**Taking medication is simply part of good diabetes management and sometimes your medication will change.**

One of the most important things you can do to stay healthy with diabetes is **manage your blood glucose**. Taking medication on schedule and making healthy lifestyle choices can help you reach your blood glucose targets.



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Type 2 diabetes changes over time. At first, healthy eating, physical activity, and one medication may be enough to reach your targets. But most people end up needing more than one medication, and maybe at some point insulin, to manage their blood glucose, no matter how hard they work to reach their targets. Your health care provider will make changes based on your treatment needs.

## Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes?

Scientists do not know the exact cause of type 2 diabetes. However, developing type 2 diabetes has been linked with several risk factors. These include if you:

- Have a history of hyperglycemia (high blood glucose), such as prediabetes and/or gestational diabetes.
- Are 45 years old or older.
- Are Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.
- Have a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes.
- Are overweight.
- Are physically inactive.
- Have high blood pressure or take medication for high blood pressure.
- Have low HDL cholesterol and/or high triglycerides.
- Have been diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome.

## How Will I Know if My Diabetes Treatment Is Working?

Get an A1C blood test at least twice a year. This helps you and your health care team know how well you are managing your blood glucose levels. The A1C test is part of your “ABCs of diabetes”—a way to check how well your diabetes treatment plan is working. The ABCs of diabetes are:

<b>A</b>	<b>is for A1C or estimated average glucose (eAG)</b> Your A1C test tells you your average blood glucose for the past two to three months. Your health care provider may call this your estimated average glucose, also called your eAG. The eAG shows your A1C results in the same units (mg/dL) as your glucose monitoring device home.
<b>B</b>	<b>is for blood pressure</b> Your blood pressure numbers tell you the force of blood inside your blood vessels. When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder.
<b>C</b>	<b>is for cholesterol</b> Your cholesterol numbers tell you about the amount of fats in your blood. Certain types of cholesterol can raise your risk for heart attack and stroke.

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