



Living with diabetes

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease. When you have diabetes, there is too much sugar (called glucose) in your blood. Diabetes can't be cured, but it can be controlled. Over time, if it's not controlled, diabetes can cause serious health problems like heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and blindness. It is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. People of every age get diabetes.

There are several types of diabetes. The two main types are:

- **Type 1.** The body does not make insulin. Insulin helps the body use glucose from food for energy.
- **Type 2.** The body does not make or use insulin well. This is the most common form of the disease.

Can diabetes be prevented?

The cause of Type 1 diabetes is not fully known. This makes it difficult to prevent. People who are overweight are more likely to get Type 2 diabetes. You can do a lot to prevent or delay getting Type 2 diabetes. Get regular exercise, eat healthy food and watch your weight.

Treating diabetes

People with Type 1 diabetes need to take insulin every day. People with Type 2 may need to take pills or insulin. People with diabetes must check their blood sugar levels often. Youth should be monitored carefully in school and during sports and other activities. If you have diabetes, see your doctor at least twice a year to find and treat problems early.

Living with diabetes

Diabetes is a serious disease, but you can learn to manage it. Here are some tips:

- **Learn how to check your own blood glucose.** You may want to do this once or twice a day. Go over your numbers with your doctor.
- **Eat healthy foods.** This includes:
 - Fruits, vegetables, fish, lean meats, poultry and low-fat milk and cheese.
 - Whole grain foods, such as whole wheat bread and crackers, oatmeal and cereals.
 - Food made with little added fat, oil, salt or sugar. Avoid fried foods.
- **Be active for 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week.** Brisk walking is a great way to be active.

- **Seek help if you feel down.** Talking with a counselor, friend, family member, support group or a religious leader may help you feel better.
- **Stop smoking.** Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).
- **Learn to cope with stress.** Stress can raise your blood sugar. It is hard to remove stress from your life, but you can learn to handle it. Local hospitals and clinics may offer free support and educational programs.
- **Take your medicines as prescribed every day** even when you feel good.
- **Check your feet every day.** Call your doctor if a cut or sore on your feet does not begin to go away after two days. Arrange to see a foot doctor if you need care.
- **Brush your teeth and floss every day** to prevent problems with your mouth, teeth or gums.
- **Tell your doctor if your eyesight changes.** Get an eye exam every year.

Mental health medicines and diabetes care

Some medicines you take to control your mental illness symptoms may cause you to gain weight. You can keep weight gain to a minimum by eating healthy foods and getting regular exercise. Be sure to check your blood sugar often. Also, keep taking all of your medicines! Talk to your doctor about your weight and your diabetes. Don't stop taking a prescribed medication without talking to your doctor. It is also best to discuss over-the-counter medications with a health care professional before using them.

Diabetes resources

National Diabetes Education Program
1-800-438-5383
www.ndep.nih.gov

American Heart Association
1-800-242-8721
www.americanheart.org

American Diabetes Association
1-800-342-2383
www.diabetes.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1-877-232-3422
www.cdc.gov/diabetes

American Dietetic Association
1-800-366-1655
www.eatright.org

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
1-800-860-8747
www.niddk.nih.gov

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.