

HEALTHY FOR LIFE

LIVING WITH DIABETES



Currently 5.3% of Australians aged 18 years+ have diabetes. Diabetes is a chronic condition where levels of glucose (sugar) in the blood are too high. Blood glucose levels are regulated by *insulin*, a hormone made by the pancreas. Diabetes occurs when there's a problem with how insulin works in the body.

When consuming food containing carbohydrates, our body converts carbohydrates into glucose, a type of sugar. Insulin transfers glucose across the bloodstream to cells in our body to be converted into energy. Individuals with diabetes, blood glucose levels are higher than normal as the body does not produce insulin (type 1 diabetes) or cannot manage insulin properly (type 2 diabetes).

TYPES OF DIABETES

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition caused by the pancreas failing to produce insulin and accounts for 10-15% of diabetes cases in Australia. Type 1 diabetes can appear at any age, but most commonly presents in childhood and early adult life. People with type 1 diabetes cannot produce enough insulin, and therefore they must inject themselves with insulin several times a day. There is currently no cure for type 1 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes, most prevalent form of diabetes in Australia, accounts for 85-90% of cases. Type 2 diabetes occurs when cells in the body develop insulin resistance. Usually diagnosed in older adults, however becoming common in adolescence and children. Cause is unknown, but risk increases with family history, ageing, prior gestational diabetes, pre-diabetes, being above healthy weight range and/or inactive lifestyle.

Gestational diabetes occurs during pregnancy. Approximately 12-14% of pregnant women will develop it around 24th-28th weeks. Hormonal changes with predisposition for poor insulin production or utilisation results in increased blood glucose levels in the mother and baby. Gestational diabetes generally disappears after baby is born, however 30-50% of women develop type 2 diabetes later in life.

Pre-diabetes is a condition which blood glucose levels are higher than normal, although not high enough to cause diabetes. Pre-diabetes has no symptoms, but has a range of risk factors including obesity, smoking, heart disease, polycystic ovarian syndrome and high blood pressure. Without treatment, about one in three people with pre-diabetes will develop type 2 diabetes.

Approximately 2 million Australians are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and although there's currently no cure for diabetes, you can live a fulfilling life by learning about the condition and managing it well. If you're at risk, check in with your GP regularly to have the necessary health checks.

REDUCING YOUR RISK OF DIABETES

- maintaining a healthy weight
- regular physical activity
- making healthy food choices
- managing blood pressure
- managing cholesterol levels
- not smoking

