



Type II Diabetes

What is Type II Diabetes?

Type II Diabetes (sometimes called “Type II Diabetes Mellitus”) is a disorder that disrupts the way your body uses sugar.

All the cells in your body need sugar to work normally. Sugar gets into cells with the help of a hormone called insulin. Insulin is made by the pancreas, an organ in the belly. If there is not enough insulin, or if the body stops responding to insulin, sugar builds up in the bloodstream. That is what happens to people with diabetes.

There are two types of diabetes. People with Type I Diabetes, the pancreas does not make insulin or makes very little insulin. People with Type II Diabetes, the body stops responding to insulin normally. Then, over time, the pancreas stops making insulin.

Having excess body weight or obesity increases a person’s risk of developing Type II Diabetes. But, people without excess body weight can develop diabetes as well.

What are the symptoms of Type II Diabetes?

- Intense thirst
- Urinating often
- Blurred vision

How do I know if I have Type II Diabetes?

Your doctor can perform a blood test to measure the amount of sugar in your blood. There are two tests that can be used for this. Both involve measuring the amount of sugar in your blood, called your “blood sugar” or “glucose”.

- One of the tests measures your blood sugar at the time the blood sample is taken. This test is done in the morning. You can’t eat or drink anything except water for at least 8 hours before the test.
- The other test shows what your “average” blood sugar has been for the past 2-3 months. This blood test is called “hemoglobin A1C” or just “A1C”. It can be checked at any time of day, even if you’ve recently eaten.

Why is it important I keep my blood sugar low?

People with diabetes have a much higher risk of heart disease and stroke than people who don’t have diabetes. Keeping blood pressure and cholesterol low can help lower those risks.

If your doctor puts you on blood pressure or cholesterol medications, be sure to take them. Studies show that medicines can prevent heart attacks, strokes, and even death.

How is Type II Diabetes treated?

The goals of treatment are to manage your blood sugar and lower the risk of future problems that can happen to people with diabetes. Treatment might include:

- **Lifestyle Changes** - This is an important part of managing diabetes. It includes eating healthy foods and getting plenty of physical activity.
- **Medicines** - There are a few medicines that can help lower blood sugar. Some people need to take pills that help the body make more insulin or that help insulin do its job. Others need insulin shots. Depending on what medicines you take you might need to check your blood sugar regularly, at home. But not everyone with Type II Diabetes needs to do this. Your doctor will tell you if you need to be checking your blood sugar regularly. Sometimes, people also need medicine to help prevent other problems caused by the disease such as medicines to lower blood pressure, to prevent heart attack or stroke.
- **General Medical Care** - It’s also important to take care of other areas of your health. This includes watching your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. You should also get certain vaccines, such as the flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine.

Can Type II Diabetes be prevented?

Yes. To lower your chances of getting Type II Diabetes, the most important thing you can do is eat a healthy diet and get plenty of exercise. This can help you lose weight if you are overweight. But eating well and being active are also good for your overall health. Even gentle activity, like walking, has benefits.

If you smoke, quitting can lower your risk. Quitting smoking can be difficult, but your doctor can help.

You can also get help from a free phone line (1-800-QUIT-NOW or 1-800-784-8669) or go online to www.smokefree.gov.