



November is Diabetes Awareness Month

Facts about diabetes

Almost 21 million Americans have diabetes, a serious disease in which blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are above normal. Most people with diabetes have type 2, which used to be called adult-onset diabetes. At one time, type 2 diabetes was more common in people over age 45. But now more young people, even children, have the disease because many are overweight or obese. Diabetes can lead to problems such as heart disease, stroke, vision loss, kidney disease, and nerve damage. About one-third of people with type 2 diabetes do not even know they have it. Many people do not find out they have diabetes until they are faced with problems such as blurry vision or heart trouble.

What is pre-diabetes?

At least 54 million Americans over age 20 have pre-diabetes. Before people develop type 2 diabetes, they usually have "pre-diabetes"—that means their blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be called diabetes. People with pre-diabetes are more likely to develop diabetes within 10 years, and they are more likely to have a heart attack or stroke.

Are you at-risk check list

There are many factors that increase your risk for diabetes. Some of the risk factors include: age 45 years or older, overweight, family member with diabetes, high blood pressure, having diabetes while pregnant (this is called gestational diabetes) or giving birth to a baby weighing 9 pounds or more, and family background that is African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider to discuss your risk for diabetes. Visit Diabetes Informational Resources on the Optima Health web site to take an online test to see if you are at risk for diabetes, and find additional resources about diabetes.

Symptoms

Diabetes often goes undiagnosed because many of its symptoms go unrecognized. Recent studies indicate that the early detection of diabetes symptoms and treatment can decrease the chance of developing the complications of diabetes. If you have one or more of the symptoms below, see your health care provider right away:

- Frequent urination
- Extreme hunger
- Increased fatigue
- Blurry vision
- Excessive thirst
- Unusual weight loss
- Irritability

Prevention

While you cannot change your genes, changes in your lifestyle, especially diet and exercise, can make a difference when it comes to diabetes prevention. Growing evidence shows that changing your diet and behavior could lower your risk. Most prevention programs stress the importance of:

- managing glucose levels and blood pressure,
- controlling cholesterol levels by making healthy food choices such as limiting the amount of total fat, saturated and trans fats as well as sodium in your diet and eating enough fiber,
- avoiding alcohol consumption, and
- being active everyday and keeping a healthy weight.

Today, many sources of support are available and you can find valuable information by visiting the following Web sites:

- <http://www.optimahealth.com/MyLifeMyPlan>
- <http://ndep.nih.gov>
- <http://www.diabetes.org>