

Nearly 26 million individuals in the United States have diabetes and another 79 million Americans have pre-diabetes and are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The American Diabetes Association is working hard to keep these numbers from rising. By establishing November as National Diabetes Awareness month, the American Diabetes Association hopes to address the problem through education and prevention. If Americans remain on this unhealthy trend, it is estimated that as many as one in three adults in the United States will have been diagnosed with diabetes by 2050.

There are two different types of diabetes, Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1 diabetes is generally diagnosed in children and young adults, and was previously known as juvenile diabetes. In Type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin (a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into glucose or energy for cells). Type 2 diabetes is far more common than Type 1 and has increasing prevalence in children. In Type 2 diabetes, either the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore the insulin. This creates a build-up of glucose in the blood instead of going into cells. This is what many people know as “high blood sugar”. Right away, your cells are starved for energy and over time, high blood glucose levels may damage your eyes, kidneys, nerves or heart. There are some known factors that may contribute to your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. These include:

- Having pre-diabetes
- Being 45 or older
- Having a family history of diabetes
- Being overweight
- Not exercising regularly
- Having high blood pressure
- Women who had gestational diabetes

Diabetes is treatable so why should I worry? Many people believe that diabetes isn't a serious condition because individuals can now manage the disease with modern medicine. In reality, diabetes can take a major toll on a person's body. Actually, diabetes contributes to many other health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and nerve damage. Also, the rate of amputation for people with diabetes is 10 times higher than for people without diabetes.

Early detection and treatment, as with any disease or medical condition, is important to prevent risk of further complications. Listed below are some common symptoms of diabetes. These symptoms may be very mild in some individuals and may go unnoticed. If you experience any of these symptoms below, you may consider talking to your doctor about being tested for diabetes.

- Frequent urination
- Feeling very thirsty
- Feeling hungry- even though you are eating
- Extreme fatigue
- Blurry vision
- Cuts/bruise that are slow to heal
- Weight loss- even though you are eating more (type 1)

- Tingling, pain, or numbness in the hands/feet (type 2)

You can prevent or delay the onset of Type 2 diabetes by adopting a healthy lifestyle. Change your diet, increase your level of physical activity, maintain a healthy weight, and quit smoking. Generally, big lifestyle changes are not realistic to keep up with. Instead, make some small changes at first. For example, start taking the stairs at work or try adding a vegetable to each meal. Small changes such as these will make your healthy lifestyle easier to maintain. Eventually, these small changes will become habit and you can move on to more small changes.

For more information on diabetes or Diabetes Awareness Month visit the American Diabetes Association website at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).