

Type II diabetes

Type II diabetes is known as non-insulin-dependent diabetes. It is the most common type of diabetes and affects some 15 million Americans. Diabetes is a disease that affects the way that the body converts the foods consumed into energy. The majority of the foods that we eat are broken down into chemical substances, including a simple sugar called glucose. Glucose is the body's main source of energy. After digestion, the glucose is absorbed in the bloodstream, where it is transported to the cells that can use it as energy.

For your cells to use the glucose, a hormone called insulin must be present in the blood. Insulin, which is produced by an organ called pancreas, allows the glucose to enter the cells. In healthy people, the pancreas automatically produces the right amount of insulin to allow the glucose to enter the cells. In people with Type II diabetes, the cells cannot use the insulin effectively to absorb the glucose, and so the glucose accumulates in the blood. This is sometimes known as insulin resistance.

Risk factors

Most people who are diagnosed with Type II diabetes are over 30 years old. Half of all new cases pertain to people over 55 years old. Type II diabetes is more common in Native Americans, African-Americans and Hispanics, compared to whites and Asians. Being overweight or obese increases the likelihood of having Type II diabetes, since insulin resistance increases with weight increase and lack of exercise. A diet rich in fats and a sedentary life are obvious causes of obesity.

Symptoms

The symptoms of Type II diabetes tend to be gradual and may not be noted until problems appear. The symptoms may include:

- tingling or numbness in the legs, feet or hands
- unusual thirst or hunger
- feeling of extreme tiredness
- need to urinate frequently
- slow healing of cuts and bruises
- blurry vision
- frequent skin, gum, vaginal or bladder infections
- itching on the skin
- unexplained weight loss

If you have any of these symptoms, you should go to the doctor.

Detection of diabetes

Many of the symptoms and complications that diabetes may produce can be prevented if diabetes is discovered when it is just starting and treatment is begun. Talk to the doctor about an evaluation to detect diabetes if:

- you are over 45 years old (the test should be done every three years)
 - you are obese
 - you have a direct relative (mother, father or brother) with diabetes
 - you belong to a high-risk ethnic group (African-American, Hispanic, Native American)
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- you gave birth to a baby that weighed over 9 pounds or were diagnosed with gestational diabetes
 - have hypertension (high blood pressure)

The best way to prevent Type II diabetes is to lead a healthy lifestyle. It is important to follow a well balanced diet with little fat and rich in foods with a lot of fiber. Exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy weight significantly reduces the risk.

If you already have diabetes, to control it, it is necessary to maintain the blood glucose concentration as close to normal as possible. This requires eating regularly and controlling diet, exercising regularly, losing weight if necessary and taking the medications the doctor prescribes. Following these instructions can increase your chances of leading a healthy life and reduce the risk of having any of the serious complications that diabetes can cause.