

What is Diabetes?



Information for patients and caregivers

Read this information to learn:

- what diabetes is
- how diabetes affects your body
- what you can do to stay healthy
- where you can learn more

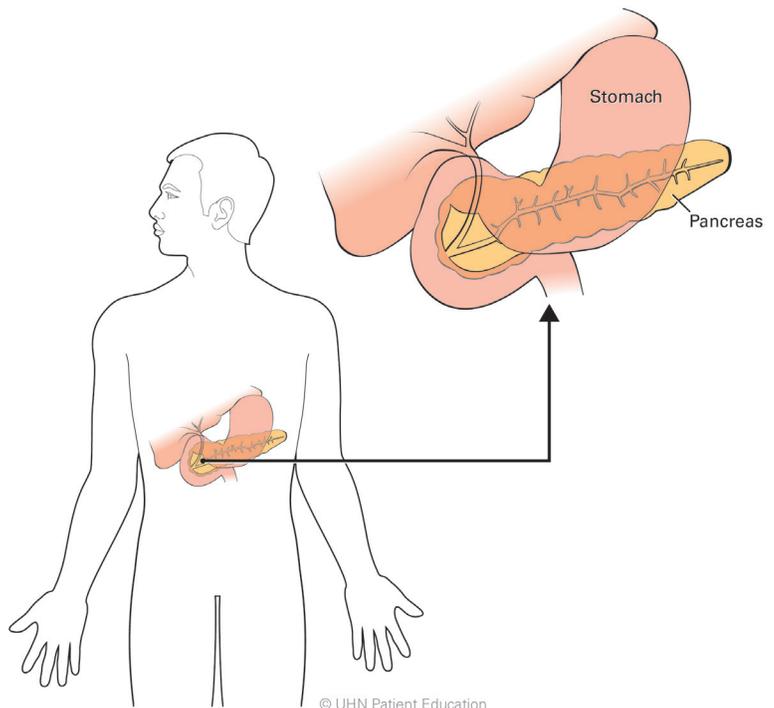


What is diabetes?

Our bodies need energy to work properly. Our bodies get energy from the sugar (glucose) in the foods we eat.

Diabetes is when there is too much sugar in the blood.

Your pancreas is an organ in your body. It makes a hormone called **insulin**. Insulin controls the amount of sugar in your blood by moving it into your cells where it is used for energy. When your body can't make enough insulin, sugar builds up in your blood. Over time, high blood sugar levels can damage your body.



What happens to my body if I have diabetes?

If your body does not make any insulin, you have **Type 1 Diabetes**.

If your body does not make enough insulin or your insulin doesn't work well, you have Type 2 Diabetes. If you have **Type 2 Diabetes**, you may not even notice any changes to your body.

Having diabetes causes high blood sugar levels, which can:

- make you have to urinate (go pee) more often
- make you feel thirsty often
- cause your eyesight to become worse
- cause your weight to change
- cause more infections
- make you feel more tired than usual

What can I do to stay healthy?

If you have Type 1 Diabetes, you must inject insulin into your body through a needle or pump to keep your blood sugar at a healthy level.

If you have Type 2 Diabetes, you may need to take pills or inject insulin. Your health care providers will talk to you about how to best manage your diabetes.

For both types of diabetes:

- ✓ Your doctor will let you know what levels your blood sugar should be to stay healthy. Check your blood sugar regularly to make sure it is at these levels.
- ✓ Visit your doctor, diabetes team, dentist and eye-care specialist regularly.
- ✓ Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol at the levels your doctor says to stay healthy.
- ✓ Be active. Regular exercise helps burn sugar in your body.
- ✓ Don't smoke. Smoking makes it harder to move sugar into your cells and damages your body.
- ✓ Diabetes increases your risk of developing foot problems. Check your feet regularly to catch any problems early.

Where can I learn more about diabetes?

Visit these websites to learn more about diabetes:

Canadian Diabetes Association – www.diabetes.ca

JDRF Canada for People living with Type 1 Diabetes – www.jdrf.ca

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: pfep@uhn.ca

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