

What is diabetes?

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Diabetes (Dye-ah-bee-tees) is a disease that happens when there is too much glucose (sugar) in the blood. It all starts with a hormone called insulin. Insulin is very important for our bodies. It helps the sugar in the food we eat to be used by our bodies for energy. If there is not enough insulin in our bodies, or if the insulin we have is not working well, the blood has high sugar levels, but the body can't use it.

If diabetes is not treated it may affect a lot of things, like blood flow, kidneys, eyes, nerves, skin, gums and teeth. Diabetes is found in children, and adults. Here are the two major types of diabetes:

- Type 1 diabetes is very common amongst young people. With this type of diabetes, the body can't make enough insulin. The treatment for type 1 diabetes is a regular injection of insulin, usually after you eat.
- Type 2 diabetes means that there is enough insulin in the body, but it doesn't work properly. Type 2 diabetes is more common in adults than in children. Children that have type 2 diabetes usually get it either from their parents, or from lifestyle factors like being overweight, eating unhealthy or not getting enough exercise. This can be treated by a change in diet and by exercising. If these do not work, your doctor might give you medicine.

Diabetes is a very serious disease, but it is manageable. If you take your medication, eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly, you can live a long and healthy life with diabetes.