

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body either cannot produce insulin or cannot properly use the insulin it produces. Insulin is a hormone that controls the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood. The body needs insulin to use sugar as an energy source. High blood sugar levels can damage organs, blood vessels and nerves.

What is the pancreas and what does it do?

The pancreas is an organ that sits behind the stomach and releases hormones into the digestive system. In the healthy body, when blood sugar levels get too high, special cells in the pancreas (called beta cells) release insulin. Insulin causes cells to take in sugar to use as energy or to store as fat. This causes blood sugar levels to go back down.

What is type 1 diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks and kills the beta cells of the pancreas. No, or very little, insulin is released into the body. As a result, sugar builds up in the blood instead of being used as energy. Type 1 diabetes generally develops in childhood or adolescence, but can develop in adulthood.

Type 1 diabetes is always treated with insulin. Meal planning also helps with keeping blood sugar at the right levels.

What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body cannot properly use the insulin that is released (called insulin insensitivity) or does not make enough insulin. As a result, sugar builds up in the blood instead of being used as energy. Type 2 diabetes develops more often in adults than children.

Depending on how advanced the type 2 diabetes is will depend on how it is treated. It may be treated with physical activity and meal planning, or may also require medications and/or insulin to control blood sugar.

What are the complications of diabetes?

Having high blood sugar can cause diabetes-related complications, like chronic kidney disease, foot problems, lower limb (leg, foot, toe, etc.) amputation, eye disease (retinopathy) that can lead to blindness, heart attack, stroke, anxiety, nerve damage, and erectile dysfunction (men).

Properly managing blood sugar levels reduces the risk of developing these complications.

What is Prediabetes?

Prediabetes refers to blood glucose (sugar) levels that are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Although not everyone with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes, many people will.

It is important to know if you have prediabetes some long-term complications associated with diabetes—such as heart disease—may begin during prediabetes.