

Are You at Risk for Diabetes?

The following topics are covered in this module on diabetes:

- I. What is Diabetes?
- II. Are You at Risk for Diabetes?
- III. Signs and Symptoms of Diabetes
- IV. How Diagnosis is Made
- V. Diabetes Prevention Strategies

I. What is Diabetes?

- A. Diabetes means that your blood sugar is too high. Your blood always has some sugar in it because your body needs sugar (glucose) for energy to keep you going. But too much sugar in the blood is not good for you.
- B. Diabetes is a condition in which your body cannot handle the sugar in food. This happens because there is not enough insulin in your body. It can also be because your body is fighting against the insulin.
- C. Insulin is a hormone that is made by a gland in your body called the pancreas. Insulin helps our body to use sugar for energy.
- D. When there is not enough insulin in your body, your blood sugar will increase.

II. Are you at risk for Diabetes?

- A. Your risk for diabetes goes up as you get older. If you gain weight; or if you do not stay active your risk will also increase. Diabetes is more common in African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- B. Diabetes affects over 16 million Americans in the United States, and half do not realize that they have it. Often, the signs and symptoms of diabetes are not diagnosed until complications start to occur. Early diagnosis is important to prevent complications such as changes in vision or the ability of the kidneys to function.
- C. Complete the **American Diabetes Association (ADA) Diabetes Risk Factor Test** <http://www.diabetes.org/main/info/risk/risktest.jsp> to determine what type of risk category you are placed in. Take this test to see if you are at risk for having diabetes.
- D. For more information about Diabetes, the risk factors, the impact of Diabetes, and the warning signs of Diabetes go to <http://www.diabetes.org>.

III. Sign and Symptoms of Diabetes

- A. High blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occurs when your body is not making enough insulin or the body is resistant to insulin. The signs of high blood sugar are:
 - Extreme thirst
 - Frequent urination
 - Blurred vision
 - Fatigue (drowsiness)
 - Infections
 - Increased hunger
 - Wounds that will not heal
 - These signs and symptoms may progress to nausea and vomiting, weight loss and diabetic coma

IV. Diagnosis of Diabetes

- A. Diabetes is often diagnosed when an individual sees his/her physician with the symptoms of high blood sugar.
- B. According to the American Diabetes Association, diabetes is diagnosed when there is a fasting blood sugar test result of 126 milligrams per deciliter or greater, or a random blood sugar test over 200 milligrams per deciliter.
- C. For blood sugar levels that are performed after fasting and are between 110-125 milligrams per deciliter, the doctor may tell you that you have impaired glucose tolerance. This means that the body may not respond with insulin as quickly as needed to deal with the amount of carbohydrates (bread, pasta, potatoes, etc.) in your diet. When this happens, the amount of sugar in the blood rises. This commonly occurs after eating.

V. Diabetes Prevention Strategies

- A. Early detection of diabetes is crucial to the prevention of long-term complications related to the disease.
- B. Persons age 65 and older are at increased risk for the development of diabetes. Blood sugar testing is recommended on an annual basis. More frequent screening is recommended if any of the diabetes risk factors are present.
- C. Make sure your meals are well balanced. Limit the amount of fat and carbohydrates you eat. Watch your portion sizes.
- D. Please click on this link for further information:
[http://www.diabetes.org/main/application/commercewf?origin=*.jsp&event=link\(F\)](http://www.diabetes.org/main/application/commercewf?origin=*.jsp&event=link(F))
- E. Exercising and eating correctly helps to achieve weight loss and weight control. Exercise can help your body to use insulin properly. It also can help you handle Stress. Exercise can lower blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar levels. Exercise also helps you to feel better about yourself. Along with diet and exercise, knowledge of the signs and symptoms of high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) is important for early detection of diabetes.

By reading this module you have taken the first step in improving our health. Congratulations! For additional information on opportunities to maintain and improve your health contact the your local PrimeTime Health Coordinator through your Area's Agency on Aging. Click on the highlighted area [Area Agencies on Aging](#) to locate the Area Agency on Aging that covers your area.

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