

Diabetes

Definition

Diabetes, also known as “the sugar,” is a long-term condition that is caused by the body’s inability to produce or regulate a hormone called insulin. Insulin is created in the pancreas. It helps the body break down sugar and carbohydrates into energy. Diabetes is categorized based on which function the body has trouble performing. If the body can’t produce any insulin it is called Type 1 Diabetes. If your body can’t produce enough insulin it is called Type 2 Diabetes. Most people with diabetes have Type 2 Diabetes. Type 2 Diabetes usually occurs in people who are overweight.

Early signs and symptoms

These three symptoms are trademark signs of diabetes:

- Increased thirst
- Increased urination
- Increased appetite

Treatment

Having diabetes can be a lot of work. Checking blood sugar levels, taking medications, giving themselves injections and being aware of food choices lead many people with diabetes to slack off of their doctor’s orders. When this happens, diabetics risk many poor health outcomes because people with diabetes do not heal as fast from infections.

Untreated or uncontrolled diabetes can cause nerve damage or numbness in the feet and hands. This can cause a diabetic with numb toes to get a life-threatening infection from a simple ingrown toenail. People with diabetes can also suffer from a lot of other long-term conditions. These long-term conditions could include heart disease, high blood pressure, gum disease and tooth loss.

Diabetes can be treated with medication or lifestyle changes. The easiest and cheapest way to treat diabetes is through diet and exercise. Diabetics should eat a diet with large amounts of fruits and vegetables and low in sugar and breads. This type of diet will help the body regulate insulin better. Exercise can help the body lose excess weight and regulate insulin better. Sometimes diabetics can reduce their need for medications by simply adjusting their eating and exercise habits.

Resources:

American Diabetes Association: <http://www.diabetes.org/>

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease: <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes>

WebMD: <http://www.webmd.com/diabetes/>