

## What I Should Know About Diabetes!

### What is diabetes?

- » Our bodies need sugar for energy to do everything we do, like walking, talking, and breathing. It is like gas for a car.
- » Glucose is another name for sugar. We get glucose from food and drinks. It goes to different parts of our body through the blood. A substance called insulin controls the amount of glucose in our blood. Normally we have the just the right amount of glucose, at all times.
- » Diabetes is a disease where our body can't use the glucose we get from eating, because we do not have the right amount of insulin. Glucose can build up and cause problems in almost every part of our body. It keeps important organs from getting what they need to work properly. People can have either Type 1 or Type 2 Diabetes.

#### Type 1 Diabetes

- » More common in younger people
- » Requires insulin injections for life
- » Lifelong healthy habits like eating well and exercising are very important for managing Type 1 diabetes

#### Type 2 Diabetes

- » More common in older people
- » In some people it can be prevented or controlled with diet and exercise
- » Can be treated with pills, but some people might need insulin injections

### Diabetes can cause problems in many areas of the body



- » Brain
- » Heart
- » Eyes
- » Kidneys
- » Teeth & Gums
- » Nerves
- » Blood Vessels
- » Feet

### How do I know I have diabetes?

- » Sometimes people do not feel any different when they have diabetes. They find out because their doctor tests their blood and finds their glucose level is higher than it should be. You might have these symptoms:
- » When your glucose is high, other people might tell you that your breath smells fruity. You also might feel tired.
- » Sometimes when you have diabetes, your glucose can also drop too low, which is called hypoglycemia, or sometimes called "hypo." This can make you feel very bad. You may feel confused, dizzy, sweaty, or shaky.





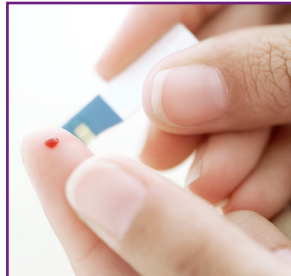
## What can I do?

- » Carefully follow all the instructions that your doctor gives you to manage your diabetes.
- » People with Type 1 diabetes will need insulin. Insulin is given through a small needle. Some people also have pumps that they wear all day that give them insulin when they need it. All people with diabetes need to check their blood glucose.

### Insulin Injection



### Blood Sample



### Testing Blood Glucose



- » People with Type 2 diabetes may also need insulin. Sometimes they only need pills.
- » Some people can control their Type 2 diabetes by eating healthy and exercising regularly. This can also stop Type 2 diabetes before it starts.

## Staying Healthy with Diabetes

### Eating Right!

- » Try not to eat very fatty or sugary foods. Some sugar is OK if it is part of a healthy, balanced diet. Talk to your doctor about what foods are best for you.
- » It is also important to eat around the same time every day and not skip meals. This keeps your glucose levels balanced.

### Exercise!

- » There are lots of ways to get moving! You can walk, dance, bike, or swim.
- » Always start off slow and then slow down when you are almost done. It is also important to drink plenty of water even before you are thirsty.
- » Keep a snack handy every time you exercise to keep your glucose levels balanced.

### Don't smoke!

- » Smoking can hurt your body and make your diabetes worse.

### Check your feet regularly!

- » Diabetes can cause problems with your nerves. If your nerves are not working right you might not feel pain in your feet like most people do. You could get sores and problems with your feet that you don't notice. It can result in foot and leg amputations (an amputation is an operation to take off a limb). Check the bottoms of your feet every day and wear comfortable shoes.

### Check your eyesight regularly!

- » Diabetes can cause problems with eyes. It is important to have them checked yearly.

**Always remember to ask your doctor if you have any questions!**



LaMartin, K. M., & Perkins, E. A. (2012). *What I Should Know about Diabetes!* Education for Lifelong Health Series, Florida Center for Inclusive Communities. [www.flcic.org](http://www.flcic.org).

Development of this material was supported by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (#90-DD-0668, Fox and Kincaid). For further information, visit [www.flcic.org](http://www.flcic.org).

