



Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico

Diabetes

Diabetes in America ...

More than 18 million Americans have diabetes. Diabetes causes heart disease and is the major cause of leg amputations, blindness, and kidney failure. Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. There is no known cure.

Could you have diabetes ... and not know it?

Yes. One third of people with diabetes don't realize they have it. A simple blood test can tell you if you do. Your risk for diabetes increases if you:

- are age 45 or older
- have a family history of diabetes
- are overweight
- are not exercising regularly
- have high cholesterol
- have had gestational diabetes or delivered a baby weighing nine pounds or more

What IS diabetes, anyway?

Having diabetes means your body either cannot produce or cannot properly use insulin, the hormone that lets your body process sugar and fat. When the body can't process sugar and fat properly, serious complications can result.

There are two types of diabetes. Type 1 occurs mostly in children and young adults. In Type 1, the body does not produce insulin. Type 2, the most common type, results from the body's inability to use the insulin it produces.

Are there any warning signs?

Yes. Talk to your doctor if you notice:

- excessive urination, thirst, or hunger
- unusual weight loss
- frequent infections, especially urinary, vaginal, or skin infections
- blurred vision

- cuts/bruises that are slow to heal
- numbness in the hands or feet

REMEMBER: Hispanic, Native American, and African American persons have an especially high risk of diabetes.

Why should I care about diabetes?

It is easy to think of "high sugar" as a minor thing. After all, "sugar" sounds friendly and sweet. But this "sugar" isn't the same as the sugar on your table. Inside the body, a high level of this kind of sugar can lead to:

- heart attacks
- blindness
- kidney failure
- leg amputations

How is diabetes treated?

It is up to YOU to take control of your diabetes. All people with diabetes need to keep track of their blood sugar, A-1-C, blood pressure, foot exams, and cholesterol levels.



People with the more common Type 2 diabetes can control their disease by eating a very healthy diet, exercising, maintaining a healthy weight, taking oral medications, and sometimes using insulin.

People with Type 1 diabetes must use insulin to survive and have special needs regarding diet and exercise.

Six Smart Steps for people who have diabetes

1. Have an A-1-C check two to four times per year. The A-1-C test is the best way to know if your diabetes is in control. A level below 7 percent is recommended.
2. Have a dilated eye exam yearly. This should be done by an eye doctor (an ophthalmologist or optometrist). Early treatment can help prevent blindness.
3. Control your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is higher than 130/80, ask your doctor if you should receive treatment.
4. Control your cholesterol level. Ask your doctor to check your LDL level at least every year.
5. Learn proper foot care. Know how to examine your feet. In addition, have your doctor examine your feet on a regular basis.
6. Don't smoke. If you smoke, your doctor can help you quit. Smoking and diabetes make a deadly combination.

The Good News

Diabetes is controllable, the complications of diabetes can be prevented, and people with diabetes can lead healthy lives.

For more information, contact the American Diabetes Association at **1-800-DIABETES** or www.diabetes.org. Or visit www.bcbsnm.com for more information about diabetes.

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