

Diabetes Mellitus

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What is Diabetes Mellitus?

- Two major types of diabetes mellitus (DM): Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1, also known as juvenile diabetes, is a lack of insulin in the body. Insulin is a hormone necessary to convert food into energy. Most common type of diabetes is Type 2 diabetes, in which the body does not respond to insulin appropriately.

What causes DM?

- Type 1 DM-Immune system destroys insulin producing cells
- Type 2 DM-Combination of genetics & environmental factors. Family history of diabetes increases the risk. Lack of diet & exercise play an important role in the onset of DM.

What are the risk factors?

History of diabetes in the family, inactive lifestyle, obesity or being overweight, hypertension and ethnicity are risk factors for diabetes.

What are the symptoms?

Feeling very thirsty, urinating often, tingling and/or numbness of hands and feet, fatigue, feeling hungry even after eating & blurred vision are some of the symptoms for diabetes.

How is DM Diagnosed?

If you display any of the symptoms, your doctor will check your blood sugar levels. If your fasting blood sugar levels are elevated multiple times (>126), then you will be diagnosed with DM. An A1C test may also be used to check your average blood sugar levels for the past 2-3 months. How often you have your blood sugar levels checked depends on your previous lab work.

What are my treatment options?

Treatment typically includes a combination of education, lifestyle modifications (diet control & exercise), insulin injections, & oral medications.

How can family members help?

Diabetes is a chronic disease that requires frequent monitoring and long-term treatment. Patients need the support of friends and family to stay positive and continue adequate management of their diabetes in order to prevent complications. A few ways a loved one can help is by monitoring & encouraging healthy eating habits, motivate physical activity, go along for doctor visits.

Can I prevent DM?

Since DM has non-modifiable risk factors such as age and family history, complete prevention may not be possible. However, if you are already aware of DM in your family, you can reduce your modifiable risk factors such as obesity, sedentary lifestyle, smoking, etc.

Resources:

- American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.org)
- www.learningaboutdiabetes.org
- www.uptodate.com