

What is type 1 diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which the body is unable to control the level of blood glucose. Glucose is essential and provides your body with the energy it needs. In type 1 diabetes the glucose level is controlled with insulin injections from diagnosis.

What causes type 1 diabetes?

The body needs a certain amount of blood glucose. This glucose comes from the carbohydrate foods we eat such as breads and cereals, fruits and starchy vegetables, milk and yoghurt, and also from sugars such as table sugar which is added to the food we eat.

Glucose is moved around the body in the blood stream and the level of blood glucose is normally controlled by insulin. Insulin is a natural hormone produced by your pancreas. As glucose enters the blood the pancreas releases just the right amount of insulin.

Type 1 diabetes is not caused by lifestyle factors. Scientists and doctors are still puzzled by the true trigger for developing type 1 diabetes. It usually occurs in children and young adults but can occur at any age. Often there is no family history.

For some unknown reason the body's auto immune system attacks the special cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. This results in no insulin being produced at all.

How do I know I have type 1 diabetes?

Most people who develop type 1 diabetes have moderate to severe symptoms that may include:

- > passing large amounts of urine frequently
- > extreme thirst
- > feeling extra tired and lack energy
- > abdominal pain
- > moderate to extreme weight loss (without trying)
- > blurred vision.

Diabetes is diagnosed using a blood test that is sent to the laboratory.

What about the numbers

For people who don't have diabetes their blood glucose would range between 3-8mmol/L. A person has diabetes if their fasting blood glucose is 7mmol/L or more, or random (any other time of the day) blood glucose is 11.1mmol/L or more.

Once a person is known to have diabetes the general blood glucose target is fasting and before meals 4-6mmol/L, after meals (usually 2 hours) up to 8mmol/L.



What can you do?

Type 1 diabetes is managed using intensive insulin therapy by either 4-6 injections of insulin under the skin each day or by a continuous insulin pump.

There are a number of self care activities that people with type 1 diabetes will need to learn. Some of these include:

- > how to inject and manage insulin
- > understanding food and the role of carbohydrates
- > what to do if unwell or blood glucose goes too high
- > what to do if blood glucose goes too low.

Regular visits to a diabetes medical specialist (endocrinologist) and diabetes educator will help you learn about and better manage your diabetes.

Can diabetes be cured?

As yet there is no cure, but type 1 diabetes can be managed. There is active research into a cure for people with type 1 diabetes.

Key points to remember

- > Type 1 diabetes is not caused by lifestyle factors.
- > There are services and support for you, ask your specialist for a referral to the diabetes education service.

Where can I go for more information?

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
www.jdrf.org.au

Dietitians Association of Australia
www.daa.asn.au

Reality Check
www.realitycheck.org.au

Diabetes Outreach
www.diabetesoutreach.org.au/consumer

Diabetes Australia
www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

Diabetes Counselling Online
www.diabetescounselling.com.au

Diabetes Outreach
8 Woodville Rd
Woodville South SA 5011
Telephone: (08) 8222 6775
www.diabetesoutreach.org.au

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