

# What is type 2 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 2 diabetes, the glucose level is controlled using healthy eating and activity as well as medication.

## What causes type 2 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.

Most people who develop type 2 diabetes have risk factors such as being over 40 years of age, a family history of type 2 diabetes, and being overweight, especially around the waist. Other risk factors include having had gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, being from a cultural group which has a high risk such as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, Pacific Islander, Indian or Chinese background.

## How do I know I have type 2 diabetes?

Some people with risk factors for type 2 diabetes will have their doctor test their blood each year to check for type 2 diabetes.

Others may develop symptoms that trigger the doctor to test you. Symptoms such as:

- > passing large amounts of urine frequently
  - > being extra thirsty
  - > feeling extra tired and lack energy
  - > blurred vision
  - > skin rashes or infection that does not heal
- should be discussed with your doctor.

Diabetes is diagnosed using a fasting blood test that is sent to a laboratory and/or an oral glucose tolerance test.

## 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 2 diabetes is managed using a combination of healthy lifestyle and medication. With time people who have type 2 diabetes will require tablets and eventually many will require insulin.

Healthy lifestyle includes healthy nutrition and weight, regular exercise, and addressing other risk factors such as smoking, blood pressure and cholesterol, to reduce the risk of complications.

There are also a few self care activities that people with type 2 diabetes will need to learn. Some of these include:

- > managing medication
- > what to do if blood glucose goes too high
- > what to do if unwell.

## Can diabetes be cured?

As yet there is no cure, but you can manage type 2 diabetes. There is active research into better and easier ways to reduce the risk of getting type 2 diabetes and managing type 2 diabetes.

## Key points to remember

- > Risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes are common.
- > Get tested if at risk or have symptoms.
- > There are services and support for you, ask your doctor for a referral to the local diabetes education service.

## Where can I go for more information?

Diabetes Outreach	<a href="http://www.diabetesoutreach.org.au/consumer">www.diabetesoutreach.org.au/consumer</a>
Diabetes Australia	<a href="http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au">www.diabetesaustralia.com.au</a>
Measure Up	<a href="http://www.australia.gov.au/measureup">www.australia.gov.au/measureup</a>
QUIT (smoking)	<a href="http://www.quitsa.org.au">www.quitsa.org.au</a>
Dietitians Association of Australia	<a href="http://www.daa.asn.au">www.daa.asn.au</a>

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### Diabetes Outreach

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[www.diabetesoutreach.org.au](http://www.diabetesoutreach.org.au)



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