

## DIABETES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Diabetes is a chronic metabolic disease that leads to the body being unable to either produce enough insulin, or to properly use it. This leads to high blood sugar levels which then increases the risk of organ, nerve and vessel damage.

Two types of the diseases are identified to date: **Diabetes Type 1** (childhood-onset or insulin dependent) is characterized by the pancreas being unable to produce enough insulin. A patient with type 1 will always need injectable insulin to control their blood sugar levels. **Diabetes Type 2** (Adult-onset or non-insulin dependent) is the most common type of diabetes and is largely dependent on lifestyle. The disease can be kept under check by a healthy diet and exercise, but oral medication is usually required. Insulin replacement may be needed later as the disease progresses.

**Prediabetes** is the condition where blood sugars are within the normal range, but high enough to point to a risk of developing Diabetes type 2.

**Gestational diabetes** is high blood sugar during pregnancy. It is linked to a higher chance of the mother or the children developing type 2 diabetes



### AM I AT RISK?

Yes, highly likely you are.

35.3 million people among the adult population are found diabetic in Pakistan, according to the Diabetes Prevalence Survey conducted by Hayatabad Medical Complex in Peshawar.

As stated by W.H.O., worldwide the number of people with diabetes has risen from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014; the prevalence has been rising in developing countries.

However, you are at an especially high risk for contracting Type 2 diabetes if you have a physically inactive lifestyle, a diet high in sugars and saturated fats, a blood relation with diabetes type 2, if you smoke and/or are above the ideal weight for your height.

Drinking one non-diet soda every day increases your risk by 22%.

### HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE DIABETES?

People with diabetes usually show certain symptoms; some of which are frequent urination (polyuria), frequent thirst, uncontrollable hunger, fatigue, unexplained weight loss and vision changes.



## I DON'T HAVE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS; DOES THAT MEAN I'M SAFE?

Not necessarily. Symptoms or signs are not always present or are not always easily detectable. It is always best to see your family health care provider regularly.

## IS DIABETES REALLY THAT SCARY?

Quite so. Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure. It increases the risk of heart attacks and stroke by a significant margin. It is an important cause of blindness and visual impairment. A majority of foot amputations are because of uncontrolled diabetes. However, following their doctor's advice and a healthy diet and exercise routine, people with diabetes can lead a normal and fulfilling life.

## HOW CAN I PREVENT IT?

Lifestyle changes and regular screening can significantly lower your risk of developing diabetes.

- Consume the correct number of calories for your age, physical activity and gender.
- 30 minutes of moderate to high intensity exercises most days a week is highly recommended.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Learn to manage stress.
- Stop Smoking
- Cut down on processed foods and added sugar.
- Get your glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) checked at least every six months.
- Check your blood sugars, fasting and random, as regularly as possible.
- Be aware of your risk factors, especially the ones that you can modify.



Remember that early screening will lead to an early diagnosis, and in turn, early disease control.

## I ALREADY HAVE DIABETES; WHAT CAN I DO TO STAY RELATIVELY HEALTHY?

Monitoring your blood sugars is key to self-management. Check your blood sugar levels after every meal and chart them. Know what foods lead to impairment and avoid them. Stay as active as possible. If you have a disability, be active in whatever way is possible for you to get your heart rate up. Do this for at least 30 minutes every day.

Have your HbA1c checked every 3 months and see your specialist at the prescribed times. Do not skip your medication without your doctor's advice. If there is any change in your symptoms, for instance, in your vision or sensation, schedule an appointment immediately.

It is also recommended to see a nutritionist to help plan your meals.