

# Diabetes Facts



## Prevalence of diabetes in Australia

Over one million Australians have diabetes - half of them don't know it - yet

## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease characterised by high blood glucose levels resulting from the body not producing insulin or using it properly. Insulin is a hormone needed for glucose to enter the cells and be converted to energy.

## Two main types of diabetes

### Type 1 diabetes (insulin dependent)

- ◆ Represents 10 to 15% of all cases of diabetes
- ◆ Occurs when the pancreas gland no longer produces the insulin needed
- ◆ Is one of the most common chronic childhood diseases in developed nations
- ◆ Is not caused by lifestyle factors

#### Diagnosis

Usually in childhood or young adulthood, although it can occur at any age.

#### Symptoms

Usually abrupt onset. Symptoms can include excessive thirst and urination, unexplained weight loss, weakness and fatigue, irritability.

#### Treatment

Lifelong insulin injections every day, regular blood glucose level tests, healthy eating plan and regular physical activity.

### Type 2 diabetes (non-insulin dependent)

- ◆ Represents 85 to 90% of all cases of diabetes
- ◆ Occurs when the pancreas is not producing enough insulin and the insulin is not working effectively
- ◆ A genetic predisposition and lifestyle factors contribute to the development of Type 2 diabetes
- ◆ Risk factors include overweight/obesity

#### Diagnosis

Usually in adults over the age of 45 but it is increasingly occurring at a younger age.

#### Symptoms

Sometimes symptoms go unnoticed as the disease develops gradually. Symptoms may include any of those for Type 1 diabetes plus blurred vision, skin infections, slow healing, tingling and numbness in the feet. Sometimes no symptoms are noticed at all.

#### Treatment

Over time treatment may progress from lifestyle modification only, to lifestyle modification and/or insulin injections.

## Gestational diabetes

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes which occurs in pregnancy and should disappear after the birth.

- ◆ Occurs in less than 9% of pregnancies (the mother does not have diabetes before pregnancy)
- ◆ Increases the risk of pregnancy complications
- ◆ Significantly increases the risk for women to develop Type 2 diabetes later in life
- ◆ May have an incidence of gestational diabetes as high as 20% amongst Aboriginal women and those from high risk ethnic groups, including India, China, Asia and Pacific Islands

## Complications of diabetes

**Diabetes and eye disease.** Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness in Australians aged under 60. The development of retinopathy is strongly related to the length of time diabetes has been present and the degree of blood glucose control. Regular checks and treatment can prevent retinopathy-caused blindness.

**Diabetes and kidney disease.** Diabetes is one of the most common causes of end stage renal disease (ESRD). In 1995 Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes accounted for 20% (Type 1: 5.8%, Type 2: 14.2%) of all new cases of ESRD diagnosed in Australia.

**Diabetes and lower limbs.** Neuropathy or peripheral nerve disease and vascular damage may lead to leg ulcers and serious foot problems from which limb amputation may result.

**Diabetes and heart disease/stroke.** Diabetes is often associated with high blood pressure and high blood fats (cholesterol and triglycerides) which greatly increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

## Erectile Dysfunction

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## Diabetes Facts *continued*

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Results of the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Life Study (AusDiab) released April 2001 show that nearly one-in-four Australian adults has either diabetes or impaired glucose metabolism, both of which are associated with substantial increased risk of both diabetes and heart disease.

- ◆ Diabetes is Australia's fastest-growing chronic disease
- ◆ It is the seventh highest cause of death in Australia
- ◆ People with diabetes are almost three times more likely to have high blood pressure, obesity or elevated blood fats eg cholesterol
- ◆ They are two to three times more likely to have cardio-vascular disease, eg heart disease and stroke
- ◆ 65%-80% of people with diabetes will die of coronary heart disease
- ◆ 15% of people with diabetes have heart disease compared to 2.5% without diabetes
- ◆ Diabetes the leading cause of kidney failure
- ◆ Renal disease accounts for 8% - 14% of deaths in people with diabetes
- ◆ 5% of people with diabetes will experience foot ulcers
- ◆ Of the 3000 amputations in people with diabetes, most are preventable
- ◆ Visual problems are common in people with diabetes
- ◆ Diabetes is the most common cause of blindness for people under 60
- ◆ Australia's indigenous population suffers the fourth highest rate of Type 2 diabetes in the world
- ◆ 1,048 people are diagnosed every week, 150 people every day
- ◆ An average of 55,000 people are diagnosed every year

### Numbers

- ◆ 520,000 Australians are diagnosed with diabetes. For every one who knows they have it, another has it but doesn't know it - yet
- ◆ That is a total of 1,040,000 people including those who are unaware they have diabetes
- ◆ By 2010, Diabetes Australia expects the number to reach 1.7 million
- ◆ Type 2 diabetes, usually found in middle age, is increasingly being diagnosed in children.

### Costs

- ◆ Total diabetes health bill is \$1.2 billion a year
- ◆ In two years it is expected to be \$2 billion
- ◆ 4% of people who have diabetes account for 12% of health costs

### High risk categories for developing Type 2 diabetes

- ◆ Over 45 years of age and have high blood pressure
- ◆ Over 45 years of age and overweight
- ◆ Over 45 years of age and one of more members of the family has/had diabetes
- ◆ Over 55 years of age
- ◆ Have heart disease or have had a heart attack
- ◆ Have/had high blood sugar levels during pregnancy (gestational diabetes)
- ◆ Have recorded a borderline blood glucose level
- ◆ Have polycystic ovary syndrome and overweight
- ◆ Over 35 years of age and are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- ◆ Over 35 years of age and from Pacific Islands, Indian subcontinent or Chinese Cultural background

### Diabetes research

At present there is no cure for neither Type 1 nor Type 2 diabetes. Researchers are hopeful that a cure for Type 1 diabetes will soon be discovered, although finding a cure for Type 2 diabetes is likely to take much longer. Diabetes Australia supports Australian research through the Diabetes Australia Research Trust which in 2001 provided a total of \$1.2 million to 27 Australian research projects.

**Type 2 diabetes may be prevented by a healthy lifestyle.**  
**Research is continuing into prevention strategies for Type 1 diabetes.**  
**A genetic predisposition and modern western lifestyle puts you at risk for Type 2 diabetes**

#### For more information

Please contact **Diabetes Australia** GPO Box 9824 in your capital city.

Phone: 1300 136 588 Website: [www.diabetesaustralia.com.au](http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au)

Statistics sourced from DA surveys, AusDiab and partner health organisations