

# Managing type 2 diabetes

Approximately 16 million people in the United States have **diabetes mellitus**, a group of diseases that affects the body's ability to effectively use simple sugars from digested foods and produce energy.

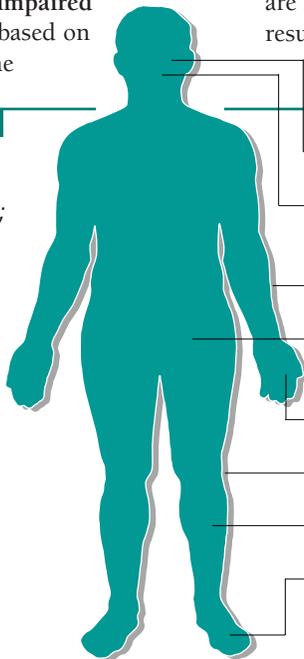
Detecting diabetes as early as possible helps to control the disease and protect against additional serious health complications. A new diagnosis called **impaired fasting glucose**, based on a blood test in the

morning before you eat, is used to identify people who have blood sugar levels just below what is considered to be diabetes. Researchers are trying to learn which of these people will go on to develop diabetes.

A study in the January 12, 2000, issue of *JAMA* reports that some people who have impaired fasting glucose may be at increased risk for heart and blood vessel diseases, which are among the complications that can result from diabetes.

## SYMPTOMS:

Some people with type 2 diabetes have no symptoms; others experience symptoms that may include:



- Blurry vision
- Increased thirst or the need to urinate
- Feeling tired or ill
- Recurring skin, gum, or bladder infections
- Dry, itchy skin
- Unexpected weight loss
- Slow-healing cuts or bruises
- Loss of feeling in the feet or tingling feet

## RISK FACTORS:

- Being over the age of 45
- Being overweight or obese
- Being inactive or not exercising regularly
- Having a family history of diabetes (if parents or siblings have the disease)
- Women who had **gestational diabetes** (diabetes during pregnancy)
- People of African, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American descent, and some Asian and Pacific Island descent are at higher risk than whites

*It may be appropriate for people with one or more of these risk factors to be screened by their doctor for diabetes as part of their routine medical care.*

## WHAT IS TYPE 2 DIABETES?

**Type 2 diabetes** is the most common form of diabetes. About 90% to 95% of all individuals with diabetes have type 2. It used to be known as adult-onset diabetes or non-insulin-dependent diabetes. In type 2 diabetes, the body is unable to properly use the **insulin** (a hormone that the body needs to use simple sugars from digested foods) that it produces. Type 2 diabetes usually occurs in adults over age 40 and most commonly among adults over age 55. About 80% of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight. In contrast, patients with **type 1 diabetes** are usually below age 30 and don't make enough insulin.

## TREATMENT:

- Many people can control type 2 diabetes through diet and regular exercise that helps them lose weight or maintain a healthy body weight. Eat a well-balanced diet that is low in fat, salt, and sugar and high in fiber (such as beans, fruits, and vegetables) and grains.
- When diet and exercise alone don't control your diabetes, your doctor will prescribe oral diabetes medications and/or insulin injections.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases  
National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse  
1 Information Way  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3560  
301/654-3327 or [www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov)
- American Diabetes Association  
800/DIABETES or [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

## INFORM YOURSELF:

To find this and previous *JAMA* Patient Pages, check out the AMA's Web site at [www.ama-assn.org/consumer.htm](http://www.ama-assn.org/consumer.htm). A previous Patient Page on diabetes was published on July 8, 1998.

Additional Sources: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Diabetes Association

Mi Young Hwang, Writer

Richard M. Glass, MD, Editor

Jeff Molter, Director of Science News

The JAMA Patient Page is a public service of JAMA and the AMA. The information and recommendations appearing on this page are appropriate in most instances, but they are not a substitute for medical diagnosis. For specific information concerning your personal medical condition, JAMA and the AMA suggest that you consult your physician. This page may be reproduced noncommercially by physicians and other health care professionals to share with patients. Any other reproduction is subject to AMA approval. To purchase bulk reprints, call 212/354-0050.

