

# April 2006 Health Bulletin

This publication compiled and edited by the H.E.E.L. Program  
(Health Education through Extension Leadership) Staff

Cooperative Extension Service



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TYPE 2 DIABETES

### Diabetes in Kentucky

Kentucky ranks 7<sup>th</sup> among the states for having the most people with diabetes. One in every eight Kentuckians has either been told they have diabetes or they have diabetes and don't know it.

### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a very serious condition in which the blood glucose (sugar) levels are too high. The body does not use or produce insulin as it should. Produced by the pancreas, insulin is a hormone that is needed to change the sugar in certain foods into energy for the body. The most common form of diabetes in adults is called **type 2 diabetes**. If the blood glucose levels stay too high for a long time, the eyes, kidneys, nerves and blood vessels can be damaged. However, there are things that people with diabetes can do to help lower the chances of this happening.

### Who gets diabetes?

There are things that increase the chances of a person developing type 2 diabetes. Some of these are:

- Having pre-diabetes
- Having a family member with diabetes
- Being overweight
- Being inactive
- Being age 45 or older
- Having high blood pressure
- Race—African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and some others are at higher risk
- Having polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS)
- Having diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) or a baby weighing over 9 pounds at birth

### What are the symptoms of diabetes?

Some people do not have any symptoms of their diabetes. Some of the most common signs and symptoms include:

- Going to the bathroom often (urinating)
- Being very thirsty
- Extreme tiredness
- Extreme hunger
- Unusual weight loss
- Blurred vision
- Tingling or numb feet
- Slow healing sores

### What is pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes formerly called "borderline diabetes" is a condition where the blood glucose is higher than normal, but not enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. People with pre-diabetes will likely go on to develop diabetes and are at higher risk for a heart attack or stroke.

### GET MOVING KENTUCKY TIP

*The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 sets recommendations for regular physical activity. Fitting in 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most days of the week can reduce your risk of chronic disease including type 2 diabetes. This activity should be in addition to what you would do in a normal day. Add a daily walk at lunch, or try a new group activity such as water aerobics or basketball.*

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**Can diabetes be prevented?**

Studies have shown that type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed by losing weight and exercising. Even losing a few pounds and exercising moderately can help.

There are also measures that will help prevent or delay the complications often seen in people with diabetes, such as heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney, and nerve damage. One of the most important steps is to see a health care professional as soon as any symptoms develop and regularly once the diagnosis of pre-diabetes or diabetes has been made.

**How is diabetes treated?**

Treatment may require medications for diabetes, losing weight, exercising, controlling blood pressure and cholesterol, and aspirin. It is very important for the person with diabetes to be actively involved in their own healthcare.

**What can be done to prevent complications?**

Monitoring blood glucose, following an appropriate diet, having an exercise routine, and seeing a physician regularly are important steps to prevent complications.

Doing the following can help to prevent complications:

- Learning how to monitor blood glucose at home
- Seeing your doctor regularly
- Following a healthy eating plan
- Exercising moderately 30 minutes a day 5 days a week
- Having A1C testing (2-4 times a year) by your doctor
- Having weight and blood pressure measured at each healthcare visit
- Having cholesterol and kidney tests done at least once a year by your doctor
- Having a foot examination at least once a year by a physician
- Having an eye examination once a year
- Seeing your dentist regularly
- Getting a flu shot once a year
- Getting a pneumonia shot at least once
- Quitting smoking



For more information on health issues in Kentucky, please visit: [www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL](http://www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL)

**County Agent Text Box:**

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.

**Sources:**

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