

NOVEMBER 2007 HEALTH BULLETIN

National Diabetes Awareness Month

Let's celebrate this month by increasing our knowledge about diabetes.

Cooperative Extension Service

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In 2005, approximately **8.9%** of Kentucky's adult population had been diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes is the **#1** cause of disability for Kentuckians and the **5th** leading cause of death by disease. Among the 50 U.S. states, Kentucky ranks **7th** for having the **highest** number in the adult population diagnosed with diabetes.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a group of chronic, metabolic diseases that result in high levels of glucose (sugar) in the blood resulting from the body's inability to use and/or produce insulin. Insulin is a hormone that helps the glucose in the blood enter the body's cells, where it is either used right away for energy or stored for later use. Without insulin, the blood glucose builds up in the bloodstream and can cause damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, and nerves. There are three major types of diabetes: **Type 1, Type 2, and Gestational**



INSERT YOUR TEXT HERE

What are the signs and symptoms of diabetes?

- Frequent urination (having to go the bathroom more often than usual for no apparent reason).
- Excessive thirst (even after drinking an adequate amount).
- Fatigue (feeling tired).
- Extreme hunger (when you normally should not be hungry).
- Unusual weight loss (not explained by dieting or increased physical activity).
- Blurred vision (results from fluid leaking into the lens of the eye from elevated blood glucose. This condition causes the lens of the eye to swell making it unable to focus properly. This condition may occur at the onset of diabetes or during periods when blood glucose fluctuates. It passes with time or when blood glucose levels decrease).
- Dry, itchy skin.
- Tingling or numbness in feet (may be a sign or damage to the blood vessels or nerves in your feet due to undiagnosed or untreated diabetes).

These signs and symptoms may indicate diabetes (although you may have no signs and symptoms). Your health care provider is the ONLY one who can make the diagnosis. DO NOT rely on symptoms only!!

What are the risk factors for diabetes?

- Being overweight.
- Being over 45 years of age.
- Being physically inactive.
- Being a member of a high risk ethnic group such as African American, American Indian, Hispanic, Asian-American, or Pacific Islander.
- Having a family history of diabetes.
- Having a HDL (good cholesterol) level of less than 35.
- Having a triglyceride level greater than 250.
- Having a history of pre-diabetes.
- Having certain conditions associated with insulin resistance, such as polycystic ovary syndrome and acanthosis nigricans (skin condition that commonly occurs around the neck or in skin folds and appears thick and dark).
- Had diabetes during pregnancy and/or a baby weighing greater than 9 pounds.

How to prevent diabetes

- Know your risk factors.
- Lose weight if you are overweight and maintain a healthy weight.
- Change your eating habits by making healthier choices. Eat more fruits and vegetables and eat fewer foods high in fat.
- Increase physical activity by participating in 30 minutes of physical activity every day. Check with your health care provider before starting a physical activ-

Sources

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