

Diabetes Basics, page 1

■ What is diabetes?

Diabetes means your blood sugar is too high. Your blood always has some sugar in it. Your body needs sugar for energy to keep you going. But too much sugar in the blood is not good for your health.

■ What is pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes means your blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough for diabetes.

- People with pre-diabetes are at higher risk for getting type 2 diabetes and heart disease.
- You can reduce your risk of getting diabetes. You may even be able to have normal blood sugar levels again! This may happen if you lose a small amount of weight by eating healthy and being more physically active.

■ What is type 2 diabetes?

People get type 2 diabetes because the cells in their muscles, liver, and fat do not use insulin properly. Over time, the body also cannot make enough insulin. This leads to high blood sugar. Having high blood sugar for some time can lead to serious problems with your eyes, heart, kidneys and nerves.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common type in American Indian and Alaska Native people. This type of diabetes can happen at any age, even in children.

■ What factors increase my risk for getting pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes?

- Being physically inactive
- Having a parent, brother or sister with diabetes
- Having had the kind of diabetes which can happen during pregnancy
- Being overweight



Diabetes Basics, page 2

■ What are the signs of type 2 diabetes?

- Signs can be severe, very mild or none at all. This depends on how high blood sugars have become. Look for these signs:
 - Increased thirst
 - Increased hunger
 - Fatigue (feeling very tired most of the time)
 - Increased urination
 - Unexplained weight loss
 - Blurred vision
- A blood test to check your blood sugar will show if you have pre-diabetes or diabetes.

■ Can type 2 diabetes be managed?

Yes. Taking care of your diabetes every day will help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range. It will help you prevent health problems that diabetes can cause over the years.

■ Where can I get help with pre-diabetes and diabetes?

- Your health care team (doctor, nurse, diabetes educator, dietitian, psychologist, fitness coach, social worker) can help you.
- Talk with them about diabetes. They can help you make a physical activity and healthy eating plan that will work for you. Many people also need medication to treat diabetes.
- Get help from others. Talk with your family and friends and ask for support.

