

ABOUT DIABETES

Know Your Facts About Diabetes

Diabetes can be confusing, but we are committed to helping you understand the facts about diabetes. The following questions will help clear up diabetes myths you may have heard.

Q: If you're overweight, will you always develop type 2 diabetes?

A: Being overweight is a risk factor for developing diabetes, but other risk factors such as how much physical activity you get, family history, ethnicity, and age also play a role. Unfortunately, many people think that weight is the only risk factor for type 2 diabetes, but many people with type 2 diabetes are at a normal weight or only moderately overweight.

Q: Do sugary drinks cause diabetes?

A: Research has also shown that drinking sugary drinks is linked to type 2 diabetes. The American Diabetes Association recommends that people avoid drinking sugar-sweetened beverages and switch to water whenever possible to help prevent type 2 diabetes.

Sugary drinks also raise blood glucose (blood sugar) and can provide several hundred calories in just one serving. Just one 12-ounce can of regular soda has about 150 calories and 40 grams of sugar, a type of carbohydrate (carb). This is the same as 10 teaspoons of sugar.

Sugar-sweetened beverages include beverages like:

- Regular soda
- Fruit punch
- Fruit drinks
- Energy drinks
- Sports drinks
- Sweet tea
- Sweetened coffee drinks
- Other sugary drinks

Q: Is diabetes a serious disease?

A: Yes. Diabetes causes more deaths per year than breast cancer and AIDS combined and having diabetes nearly doubles your chance of having a heart attack. The good news is that managing your diabetes can reduce your risk for diabetes complications.

Q: Do people with diabetes need to eat special foods?

A: No, you don't need special food. Foods with special "diabetes-friendly" claims may still raise blood glucose levels, be more expensive, and/or contain sugar alcohols that can have a laxative effect.

A healthy meal plan for people with diabetes is generally the same as healthy eating for anyone. In fact, there are a lot of different eating plans that can help you manage your diabetes. In general, a healthy eating plan for diabetes will include lots of non-starchy vegetables, limit added sugars, swap refined grains for whole grains and prioritize whole foods over highly processed foods when possible.

Want to add more veggies and whole foods, but don't know where to start? [Try Diabetes Food Hub®!](#)

Q: If you have diabetes, can you eat starchy foods, such as bread, potatoes, and pasta?

A: Starchy foods can be part of a healthy meal plan, but portion size is key. These foods tend to have more carbs and eating them will raise your blood glucose.

Q: Do people with diabetes need to avoid carbs?

A: There is no evidence to suggest that people with diabetes need to avoid carbs, though some people choose eating plans that avoid them. In fact, the evidence suggests that including the right amounts of carbs, protein, and fat can help manage your blood glucose. Working with your health care team can help you find the right balance for you.

Q: Not sure where to start...?

A: Aim for a portion no bigger than a quarter of a 9-inch plate.

Q: Can people with diabetes eat sweets or chocolate?

A: If eaten as part of a healthy meal plan sweets and desserts can be eaten by people with diabetes. The key to sweets is to have a very small portion and save them for special occasions so you focus your meals on healthier foods. Working with a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) or diabetes care and education specialist (CDCES) will help you determine an individualized meal plan that takes into account your goals as well as your likes and dislikes.

Q: Can you catch diabetes from someone else?

A: No. Although we don't know exactly why some people develop diabetes and others don't, we know diabetes is not contagious. It can't be caught like a cold or flu.

Q: Are people with diabetes more likely to get colds and other illnesses?

A: You are no more likely to get a cold or another illness if you have diabetes. People with diabetes are advised to get flu shots. This is because any illness can make diabetes more difficult to control, and people with diabetes who get the flu are more likely than others to go on to develop serious complications.

Q: If you have type 2 diabetes and your doctor says you need to start using insulin, does it mean you're failing to take care of your diabetes properly?

A: Using insulin to get blood glucose levels to a healthy level is a good thing, not a bad one. Type 2 diabetes is a progressive disease. When first diagnosed, many people with type 2 diabetes can keep their blood glucose at a healthy level with a combination of meal planning, physical activity, and taking oral medications. But over time, the body gradually produces less and less of its own insulin, and eventually, oral medications may not be enough to keep blood glucose levels in a healthy range.

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