

## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a health problem that causes blood glucose (sugar) levels to be higher than normal. When you eat, your body breaks food down into glucose. Then, your body sends glucose into your blood.

Your pancreas makes a hormone called insulin. Insulin helps move glucose from the blood into your cells. When glucose enters your cells, it's either used as energy right away or stored for later. In a person with diabetes, there is a problem with insulin. Not all people with diabetes have the same problem. If you have diabetes, your body might not make enough insulin, can't use insulin well, or both.

## How does diabetes affect my community?

Diabetes in Asian/Pacific Islanders (APIs) is growing quickly. In LA County:

- From 1997 to 2011, APIs have diabetes at a rate of about 6% to 10%.
- In 2010, diabetes was three times more common among APIs than whites.

A cause of these high rates of diabetes is the change from plant and fish-based diets to foods with more animal protein and fats, and processed carbohydrates. Another cause is being less physically active. Despite having low weight, genes might cause APIs to get diabetes from a small amount of weight gain.

## How do I know if I have diabetes?

Some people with Type 2 diabetes have signs so mild that they are not seen. But some common signs of diabetes are:

- Urinating often
- Feeling very thirsty
- Feeling very hungry even though you're eating
- Feeling very tired
- Blurry vision
- Cuts/bruises that heal slowly
- Weight loss even though you're eating more (Type 1)
- Tingling, pain, or numbness in the hands/feet (Type 2)

## Where do I go for more information?



<http://www.asianpacificdiabetes.org/>



American Diabetes Association.

<http://www.diabetes.org/>



# An Introduction to Diabetes



## What are the types of diabetes?

### Type 1

Beta cells make insulin in your pancreas. In Type 1 diabetes, the immune system kills the beta cells by mistake. Your body treats these cells as foreign invaders and destroys them. The destruction can happen over a few weeks, months, or years. When enough beta cells are destroyed, your pancreas stops making insulin, or makes so little insulin that you need to take more to live.

### Type 2

In Type 2 diabetes, the body doesn't use insulin the right way. This is called insulin-resistance. 95% of diabetes seen in Asian descendants is Type 2. At first, the beta cells make extra insulin. But, over time your pancreas is not able to keep up and can't make enough insulin to keep your blood glucose at normal levels.



The high rate of Type 2 diabetes, especially among those of Asian descent, is caused by a mix of genetic and environmental causes.

Some people with Type 2 diabetes can control their diabetes with healthy eating and exercise. Others may also need a prescription for oral medications (pills) or insulin to help reach normal blood glucose levels. Diabetes is a progressive disease—even if you don't need medication at first, you may need it as times passes.

## How is diabetes treated?

Diabetes may be treated with insulin, pills, exercise, and meal planning.

If not treated, diabetes can lead to health problems like nerve, kidney, or eye damage; heart disease; and stroke. But if managed well, you can live a long and healthy life.



## How can I manage diabetes?

You will work with your health care team to control diabetes. Together, you will make a plan to reach your goals and keep track of the ABC's of diabetes:

### A is for A1C:

Your A1C check tells you your average blood glucose for the past 2 or 3 months.

### B is for blood pressure:

Your blood pressure numbers tell you the force of blood inside your blood vessels. Your heart has to work harder when your blood pressure is high.

### C is for cholesterol:

Your cholesterol numbers tell how much fat is in your blood. HDL cholesterol helps protect your heart. LDL cholesterol can clog your blood vessels and lead to heart disease. Triglycerides are another kind of blood fat that raises your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

