



Your Health Matters

Working Together Toward Better Care

An Update from the Department of Health

Diabetes in Nova Scotia—Facts

December 15, 2003

There are three types of diabetes:

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas no longer produces any or very little insulin. The body needs insulin to use sugar for energy. Approximately 10 per cent of people with diabetes have type 1 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or when the body does not use the insulin that is produced effectively. 90 per cent of people with diabetes have type 2.

Gestational diabetes is a temporary condition that occurs during pregnancy. It affects two to four percent of all pregnancies with an increased risk of developing diabetes for both mother and child.

Risk factors for developing diabetes include the following:

- being age 40 or over
- being overweight (especially if you carry most of your weight around your middle)
- being a member of a high-risk group (Aboriginal peoples, Hispanic, Asian or African descent)
- having a parent, brother or sister with diabetes having given birth to a baby that weighed over 4 kg (9 lbs) at birth, or have had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy)
- having high cholesterol or other fats in the blood
- having higher-than-normal blood glucose levels having high blood pressure or heart disease

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In Nova Scotia we estimate that over 40,000 individuals have been diagnosed with diabetes. This translates into 5 per cent of the population over age 20.

Over 4,000 people are newly diagnosed with diabetes in Nova Scotia each year.

There are currently 36 Diabetes Centres located throughout Nova Scotia.

The Diabetes Care Program of Nova Scotia (DCPNS) was initiated in 1991 by the Department of Health. As identified in the Canadian Diabetes Association's 2001 Diabetes Report Card, this provincial program is a unique program responsible for standards, education and monitoring.

The Program has also recently released *Guidelines for the Care of Children and Adolescents with Diabetes* and is working with partners to improve the uptake of the Canadian Clinical Practice Guidelines for Diabetes.

Under the pharmacare programs, the province spends \$10.5 million on drugs and diabetic supplies used to manage diabetes.

Nova Scotia has improved financial coverage for seniors by capping the co-payment requirement at \$30 per prescription, as well as improving access to teams of health professionals, and improving coordination within the health system and putting greater emphasis on illness prevention.

The Department of Health and the Office of Health Promotion have also been working with many interested groups on a long-term plan to prevent chronic disease. This is a long-term strategy that the Diabetes Care Program will play a key role in implementing over the coming years.