



TYPE 2 DIABETES

The Issue

Type 2 diabetes is one of the fastest growing diseases in Canada with more than 60,000 new cases yearly. Nine out of ten people with diabetes have type 2 diabetes. The good news is that type 2 diabetes can be prevented or postponed by making healthy lifestyle choices.

Background

Diabetes is a lifelong condition where either your body does not produce enough insulin, or the body cannot use the insulin it produces. The body needs insulin in order to change the sugar from food into energy. If your body does not have insulin or cannot use it properly, the result is a high blood sugar (glucose) level. There are three main types of diabetes:

- Type 1, where the body makes little or no insulin.
- Type 2, where the body makes insulin but cannot use it properly.
- Gestational diabetes, where the body does not properly use insulin during pregnancy. This type of diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born.

At the present, type 1 diabetes cannot be prevented, and people living with type 1 diabetes depend on insulin to stay alive.

It is estimated that close to two million Canadian adults have diabetes. One third of these people are unaware that they have the disease. Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in Canada and the cost of diabetes is estimated to be up to \$9 billion a year.

Symptoms of Type 2 Diabetes

The classic symptoms of diabetes (type 1 and type 2) are the following:

- fatigue
- frequent urination
- unusual thirst
- unexplained weight loss

In type 1 diabetes, the symptoms usually progress quickly and are often dramatic. In type 2 diabetes, symptoms are slower to progress. However, it is important to note that many people who have type 2 diabetes may have no symptoms. These people may find out they have type 2 diabetes when they go to the doctor for another, unrelated problem.

The Health Risks of Type 2 Diabetes

Diabetes is a lifelong condition. High blood glucose levels over a long period of time can cause:

- blindness
- heart disease
- reduced blood supply to the limbs, leading to amputation
- nerve damage
- erectile dysfunction
- stroke

Although there is no cure for diabetes, the condition can be managed by medication and/or insulin, and by making healthy lifestyle choices.



Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes

There is no single cause of type 2 diabetes but some factors can put you at greater risk. They include:

- being age 40 or over
- being overweight (especially with abdominal obesity)
- having a family member who has diabetes
- having had gestational diabetes
- having given birth to a baby that weighed more than 4 kg (9 lb) at birth
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol or other fats in the blood
- member of a high-risk ethnic group

Aboriginal people have three to five times the risk of developing type 2 diabetes than other Canadians. Even Aboriginal children are now being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, a condition that usually occurs in older adults. People of Hispanic, Asian, South Asian or African descent are also more at risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Minimizing Your Risk

You can help prevent or postpone type 2 diabetes by taking these measures:

- Don't smoke.
- Achieve a healthy weight and maintain it.
- Be physically active.
- Limit your intake of fat and sugar.
- Eat regular, balanced meals that include the four food groups from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.
- Keep your cholesterol and other blood fats within the target level.

- Maintain a normal blood pressure.

Should you develop type 2 diabetes, you should also follow these steps to manage it effectively:

- Take your medication as prescribed.
- Monitor your blood glucose regularly as recommended by your doctor.
- Take care of your feet by examining the skin for redness and sores.
- Visit your doctor and dentist regularly and see an eye specialist as recommended.
- Consult a dietitian about creating balanced meals.
- If you drink alcohol, consume it in moderation and avoid drinking on an empty stomach as this can cause hypoglycemia (low blood glucose).
- If you are pregnant, ask your doctor about using artificial sweeteners.

The Governments' Roles

In 1999, the Government of Canada pledged \$115 million over five years to develop a Canadian Diabetes Strategy, to enable Canadians to benefit more fully from the resources and expertise available across the country. In 2004, additional funding of \$30 million was provided for another year. Partners in this national initiative include the provinces and territories, non-government organizations, national health bodies and interest groups, and Aboriginal communities.

The Canadian Diabetes Strategy has four major goals:

- Develop a health-promotion, disease-prevention strategy for the entire population.

- Care for and treat First Nations people on-reserve and in Inuit communities.

- Provide culturally appropriate prevention, education, and lifestyle supports for all Aboriginal people.

- Improve national and regional information about diabetes and its complications.

- Develop a pan-Canadian collaborative plan for diabetes involving key diabetes stakeholders.

Need More Info?

If you need more information on type 2 diabetes, the following resources are available:

- Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Public Health Agency of Canada
120 Colonnade Road, AL 6701A
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9
(613) 954-4901
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ccdpc-cpcmc/diabetes-diabete/english/index.html>
- Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnihb/cp/adi/>
- Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_rainbow_e.html
- Canadian Diabetes Association,
1-800 BANTING (1-800-226-8464)
- Diabetes Québec, if you live in Quebec, (514) 259-3422 or 1-800-361-3504

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