

## So you have diabetes...

Take comfort in knowing that there has never been a better time to manage this disease. Though diabetes is serious, it's also *controllable*. Eating right, staying active, monitoring your blood sugar, and taking medications (if needed) can go a long way in keeping you healthy and strong for years to come. That means much of your diabetes management depends on *YOU!* So learn as much as you can about diabetes, good blood sugar control, and preventing diabetes-related complications.

### Types of Diabetes

Diabetes means that blood sugar is too high. Blood sugars are high when there is not enough working insulin in the body. Nearly 16 million Americans have diabetes. The majority of those people have Type 2 diabetes, but there are different types.

*Type 1 Diabetes* – This auto-immune disease usually is seen in children or teens. It is caused by a genetic defect that causes the immune system to destroy the body's own insulin-making cells. These people stop making insulin and must start on insulin injections right away.

*Type 2 Diabetes* – In this case, the body still makes some insulin, but it doesn't work as well as it should. We sometimes call these people "insulin resistant". These people may just need to change their diet for good blood sugar control, or may need pills or insulin injections as time goes on.

*Gestational Diabetes* – The stress and hormonal changes of pregnancy can trigger this special type of diabetes, usually seen around 26 weeks of pregnancy. This type of diabetes usually goes away after delivery, but should be taken seriously. Uncontrolled, the baby may grow too big for normal delivery, and the risk of pregnancy complications can increase. Women with gestational diabetes often get Type 2 diabetes later on in life.

### Managing Diabetes

You may have heard people say they have a "touch of sugar" or "borderline diabetes". These words suggest that diabetes is not serious. *That is not correct* – all high blood sugar should be treated to bring numbers in near-normal ranges.

#### High blood sugar can result in:

- heart disease and stroke
- eye damage and eventual blindness
- nerve damage and possible amputation of feet or legs
- kidney problems that could lead to dialysis
- gum disease and loss of teeth

#### When blood sugar is near normal levels, you will probably:

- have more energy, be less tired, and get a better night's sleep
- heal better and have fewer skin or bladder infections
- have fewer problems with your vision, feet and gums