

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a group of diseases marked by high levels of sugar in the blood. It happens when the body cannot produce enough insulin, or when the insulin is not properly used. Over time, the high blood sugar can cause vision problems, nerve disease, kidney damage, heart disease, and stroke.

Who is affected by diabetes in Connecticut?

- About 185,000 adults 18 years of age and older have been diagnosed with diabetes.
- In addition, more than 60,000 adults may have diabetes that has not yet been diagnosed, partly because the symptoms develop gradually.
- About 15% of Black adults and 10.5% of Hispanic adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, compared to 6.4% of the overall population.
- The estimated cost of diabetes in 2006 was \$2.43 billion. The true cost is not known, because people generally do not die from the disease itself, but rather from its complications.
- Diabetes is a leading cause of kidney failure, nontraumatic lower-limb amputations, and new cases of blindness among adults.
- Diabetes is also a major cause of heart disease and stroke.
- Diabetes is the eighth leading cause of death in Connecticut.

Data Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health.
The Burden of Diabetes in Connecticut: 2010 Surveillance Report

Why is it important to know if you have a family history of diabetes?

Diabetes often runs in families. The American Diabetes Association recommends screening for diabetes beginning at age 45. People who are overweight and have a mother, father, sister, or brother with diabetes or other risk factors listed below should get tested sooner.

Why is it important to learn about diabetes?

People can change their lifestyle to lower their chances of getting diabetes, and people with diabetes can manage their disease. They can follow a meal plan, exercise more, keep track of the level of sugar in their blood, and take the proper medications. People with diabetes can enroll in a diabetes education program to learn these things.

It is also important to know the risk factors for diabetes and to ask your doctor about being screened if:

- You do not get much exercise.
- Your race is African American/black, Native American, Asian, or Pacific Islander, or you are Hispanic/Latino.
- You have high blood pressure (over 140/90 mm Hg).
- You have low HDL cholesterol (less than 35 mg/dL) or high triglycerides. (more than 250 mg/dL) in your blood.

Your Family Health History

Know your past. Act in the present. Protect your future.

- You have a history of vascular (blood vessel) disease, including heart disease and stroke
- You are a woman who had diabetes while you were pregnant, or you gave birth to a baby that weighed more than 9 pounds.
- You are a woman with polycystic ovary disease.

The good news:

Diabetes and pre-diabetes are easy to diagnose with a simple blood test. Blood sugar and other health and lifestyle factors can be controlled to prevent or at least delay the onset and complications of diabetes. High blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are risk factors for diabetes, also can be controlled.

Diabetes Resources:

If you have diabetes, ask your doctor for a referral to a diabetes education program to learn about how to control your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol, and to manage your diabetes.

To find an education program approved by the American Diabetes Association, go to www.ct.gov/dph and type “diabetes” in the DPH search box

You can find more information on diabetes at these web sites:

Connecticut Department of Public Health Diabetes Program

www.ct.gov/dph or (860) 509-7801

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International

www.jdrf.org

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

To find State Diabetes Prevention Programs.

www.cdc.gov/diabetes

National Diabetes Education Program

www.ndep.nih.gov

American Diabetes Association

www.diabetes.org or 1 (800) DIABETES (1 [800] 342-2383)