

WHAT IS DIABETES?



Diabetes can happen to anyone! Today, diabetes takes more lives than AIDS and Breast Cancer combined and is a problem people are experiencing worldwide. So what exactly is diabetes? In order to understand that we first need to understand what happens to the body when we do something as simple as eat a meal.

After eating a meal, sugars (or glucose) are released into the blood. When sensing the sugar

levels in the blood, a regular functioning body would then release insulin from the pancreas which allows blood cells to open so that they can absorb the glucose from the blood. It is important to be able to absorb the glucose from the blood so that it can be converted into energy which we need to function. So, without insulin, blood cells would not be able to absorb the necessary sugars from a meal and thus would not provide the amount of energy a body needs to survive.

This is what happens to a person who has diabetes. A diabetic is lacking the appropriate amount of insulin in their body to open up their blood cells. Without insulin, the sugar stays in the blood and does not convert into energy. This can be very dangerous because the person is starved from the amount of energy that they need from their food and the excessive sugar in their blood can cause a variety of problems.

The most common types of diabetes are Type 1 diabetes, and Type 2 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes is the more serious of the two. In this condition the immune system attacks the pancreas. When the insulin is released from the pancreas the immune system mistakes the insulin as a foreign substance and removes it from the blood. Without the insulin, the blood sugar levels remain very high. Type 1 diabetes requires consistent insulin injections so that the blood can absorb the sugar from a meal. Because food portions, exercise, and stress all factor in, it is a difficult balancing act to ensure the blood has the appropriate amount of sugar levels. If you inject too much insulin, blood sugar levels can drop to dangerously low levels, a condition known as hypoglycemia and if you do not inject enough, blood sugar levels remain too high.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common kind of diabetes and is often linked to people who are obese. People with type 2 can produce some of their own insulin but not enough, or their blood cells will resist the insulin and not open up to absorb the sugars. With the blood cells resisting the insulin the person is unable to burn the sugars which, again, deprives the body of energy and leaves the blood sugar levels very high. Treatment for type 2 generally focuses on diet and exercise and, in some cases, oral medications or injections are used if necessary.

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart failure, amputations, stroke, and even death, so it is extremely important to maintain a healthy diet and regularly exercise in order to prevent diseases like diabetes and improve your overall quality of life.