Expected to rise even further. As the baby boom population ages, the number is projected to increase even more. After eating, your blood sugar levels rise, and your pancreas releases insulin to help your cells absorb the sugar. However, if your body can’t produce enough insulin or doesn’t use the insulin properly, it can’t deliver sugar to your cells. Instead, the sugar stays in your bloodstream, leading to diabetes. Diabetestrans are a serious disease. If not diagnosed and treated early, it can have dire consequences, causing blindness, heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, birth defects, and amputations. Diabetes kills more than 200,000 Americans every year.

You may not know you have it. Onset is often gradual and difficult to identify—you can have diabetes without any symptoms. In fact, half of those affected don’t even know they have the disease until they seek help for one of its complications.

It’s a growing disease. About 21 million Americans have diabetes—that’s almost 7% of us. As the baby boom population ages, the number is expected to rise even further.

For More Information
American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
www.niddk.nih.gov

BlueCross BlueShield of Nebraska
An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association
Living With Diabetes

There is no cure for diabetes yet, but we know a lot about managing the disease.

If you are diabetic, living a healthy lifestyle that includes a good diet, exercise, and weight control, you can help keep your blood sugar levels at an acceptable range—the most important thing you can do to prevent long-term complications.

Good control of blood sugar can reduce your risk of eye, nerve, and kidney complications by 50 to 70 percent and lower your risk for heart attack, stroke, and limb amputation. Depending on the type and severity of your diabetes, you may need to combine these measures with medication to keep your blood sugar under control.

Do You Know... What’s Your Risk?

A large portion of the 21 million Americans who have diabetes don’t know it. Take the following quiz to determine your risk. Write in the points next to each statement that is true. If a statement is not true, put a zero. Then add up your score.

1. My weight is equal to or above that listed in the at-risk weight chart below. ................................................................. Yes (5)
2. I am under 65 years of age and I get little or no exercise during a usual day ................................................................. Yes (5)
3. I am between 45–64 years of age ............................................. Yes (5)
4. I am 65 years of age or older...................................................... Yes (9)
5. I am a woman who has had a baby weighing more than nine pounds at birth................................................................. Yes (1)
6. I have a sister/brother with diabetes ........................................ Yes (1)
7. I have a parent with diabetes .................................................... Yes (1)

TOTAL........................................................................................................

If you scored 3-9 points: You are probably at low risk for developing diabetes now, but you could be at a higher risk in the future. Exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy weight can help prevent diabetes. The American Diabetes Association recommends everyone be tested for the disease at age 45 and every three years thereafter. Those at increased risk should be tested at a younger age and more frequently.

If you scored 10 points or more: You are at high risk for having diabetes. See a doctor soon and find out for sure.

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What You Can Do...

Keep Your Diabetes In Control

Weight Control

Maintaining your proper weight is a key component in managing Type 2 diabetes and in preventing its onset. 80 to 90% of people with Type 2 diabetes are overweight. Being overweight causes your cells to become more resistant to your own insulin. Losing excess weight will reduce that resistance and in some cases, bring your blood sugar back into the normal range. Exercise and diet can help you control your weight.

A Healthy Diet

A diet containing a variety of high fiber foods, fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and fish will help you control your blood sugar levels. Some experts believe that slow-acting carbohydrates like dried beans, legumes, peas, yogurt, apples, broccoli, oranges, and whole grains are better than fast-acting carbohydrates like sweet drinks and white bread. Others believe it’s the total carbohydrate intake that counts. Talk it over with your doctor.

Small, Regular Meals

Avoid very large meals or skipping meals, which can cause wide glucose swings. Instead, eat smaller servings at regular periods throughout the day.

Exercise

If you’re at risk for developing diabetes, exercise may help prevent it. If you already have diabetes, exercise can reduce or eliminate the need for insulin. Exercise helps control weight, makes cells more sensitive to insulin, uses up blood sugar, increases blood flow, improves circulation throughout the body, and reduces your risk for cardiovascular disease. Try to exercise at the same time each day and check your blood glucose before and after exercising. Talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

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Here’s Your Chance To TAKE ACTION!

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Regular Communication With Your Health Care Professionals

Because diabetes is a complex disease, you may need a health care team including your doctor, nurse, dietitian, and possibly an eye or foot doctor or cardiologist. You and your doctor will put together a diabetes care plan that will work with your lifestyle.

You need to stay in touch with your doctor by phone every week—or even daily—when starting a new diabetes care plan or making big changes in your current plan. Thereafter, you should see your doctor two to three times a year. If you take insulin, are having trouble controlling your glucose levels, or are having complications, you’ll need to see your doctor more often.

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Ouch! Problems With Compliance

It’s estimated that 70% of people with diabetes don’t test their blood sugar levels daily. One reason is that it hurts to prick their fingers to produce blood to test. The Food and Drug Administration has approved a new battery-operated laser that makes a hole in the finger virtually pain free. So far it’s too heavy to carry around, and too expensive for most patients, but a home model is coming.

Researchers are working on other, even less invasive testing methods as well.