

# The Health Connector

## Diabetes: Are you at Risk?

### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism—the way the body uses digested food for growth and energy. Most of the food people eat is broken down into glucose, the form of sugar in the blood. Glucose is the main source of fuel for the body.

After digestion, glucose passes into the bloodstream, where it is used by cells for growth and energy. For glucose to get into cells, insulin must be present. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas, a large gland behind the stomach.

When people eat, they naturally produce the right amount of insulin to move glucose from blood into the cells. However, People with diabetes do not always produce the right amount of insulin, and glucose does not enter their cells correctly.

**Type 1 diabetes**, may account for about 5% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

**Type 2 diabetes**, or adult-onset diabetes, may account for about 90% to 95% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

**Other specific types of diabetes** resulting from specific genetic syndromes, surgery, drugs, malnutrition, infections, and other illnesses may account for 1% to 5% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes.

### What are the risk factors for diabetes?

**Risk factors are less well defined for type 1 diabetes than for type 2 diabetes, but autoimmune,**

- Autoimmune Factors
- Genetic Factors
- Environmental Factors

**Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include**

- Older Age
- Obesity
- Family History of Diabetes
- Prior History of Gestational Diabetes
- Impaired Glucose Tolerance
- Physical Inactivity
- Race/Ethnicity

African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, and some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at particularly high risk for type 2 diabetes.

**Other specific types of diabetes, which may account for 1% to 5% of all diagnosed cases, result from**

- Specific Genetic Syndromes
- Surgery
- Drugs
- Malnutrition
- Infections
- Other Illnesses

### What is the treatment for diabetes?

Type 1 basic therapies for type 1 diabetes.

- Healthy eating
- Physical Activity
- Insulin Injections

The amount of insulin taken must be balanced with food intake and daily activities. Blood glucose levels must be watched closely.

In addition, many people with type 2 diabetes require medication, insulin, or both to control their blood glucose levels.

People with diabetes must take responsibility for their day-to-day care, and keep blood glucose levels from going too low or too high.

People with diabetes should see a health care provider who will help monitor and control this disorder.

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### *A Study of Smoking Cessation*

About 70% of the 46.6 million smokers in the U.S. want to quit, and more than 40% try to quit each year. However, counseling to help smokers quit and medications are not readily available to uninsured patients and patients whose health plans omit or restrict coverage. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) provides funding to help states promote quitting programs and evaluate their efforts.

Recently, the CDC helped promote stop smoking interventions in Massachusetts that led to a sharp re-

duction in smoking rates among Medicaid beneficiaries. The state expanded Medicaid benefits to include coverage of up to 16 individual or group counseling sessions and two 90-day supplies a year of medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Eligible participants could receive these benefits for co-payments of \$1–\$3.

To promote the intervention, state health officials worked with community and professional groups to distribute educational materials and make presentations to health care providers. They also mailed materials to residents across the state, distrib-

uted posters through local groups, and ran advertisements in print, radio, and transit markets.

An evaluation of the intervention found that about 37% of all Medicaid beneficiaries who were smokers (70,140 people) used these benefits. During the first 18 months, smoking rates among Medicaid beneficiaries in Massachusetts declined by 26%. During the same period, hospital admissions for heart attacks decreased by 46% for this population group. Admissions for other heart disease diagnoses decreased by 49%.



### *HIV/AIDS Awareness*

HIV is the human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus that can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that about 56,000 people in the United States contracted HIV in 2006.

Within a few weeks of being infected with HIV, some people develop flu-like symptoms that last for a week or two, but others have no symptoms at all. People living with HIV may appear and feel healthy for many years. However, even if they feel healthy, HIV is still affecting their bodies. All people with HIV should be seen on a regular basis by a health care provider experienced with treating HIV infection. Many people with HIV, including those who feel

healthy, can benefit greatly from current medications used to treat HIV infection. These medications can limit or slow down the destruction of the immune system, improve the health of people living with HIV, and may reduce their ability to transmit HIV. Untreated early HIV infection is also associated with many diseases including cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, liver disease, and cancer. Support services are also available to many people with HIV. These services can help people cope with their diagnosis, reduce risk behavior, and find needed services.

AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection, when a person's immune system is severely damaged and has difficulty fighting diseases and certain cancers. Before the development of certain medications, people with HIV could progress to AIDS in just a few years. Currently, people can live much longer - even decades -

with HIV before they develop AIDS. This is because of “highly active” combinations of medications that were introduced in the mid 1990s.

While current medications can dramatically improve the health of people living with HIV and slow progression from HIV infection to AIDS, existing treatments need to be taken daily for the rest of a person's life, need to be carefully monitored, and come with costs and potential side effects. At this time, there is no cure for HIV infection. Despite major advances in diagnosing and treating HIV infection, in 2007, 35,962 cases of AIDS were diagnosed and 14,110 deaths among people living with HIV were reported in the United States.





Wear red in February for American

Heart Month and National Wear Red Day (the first Friday in February) to help raise awareness about heart disease, but don't stop there. Make sure you know the signs of a heart attack, questions to ask your doctor about heart health, and how to lower your risk for heart disease.

Getting answers to these questions will help you better understand your heart health. Take this list to your next appointment, and write in the answers.

- What is my risk for heart disease?
- What is my blood pressure? What does it mean for me, and what do I need to do about it?
- What are my cholesterol numbers (including total cholesterol, LDL or "bad" cholesterol, HDL or "good" cholesterol, and triglycerides)? What do they mean for me, and what do I need to do about

## What you need to know

them?

- What is my "body mass index" or "BMI" and waist measurement? Is my BMI in the "normal" range? Do I need to lose weight for my health?
- What is my blood sugar level?
- Am I at risk for diabetes?
- What other screening tests for heart disease do I need? How often should I return for check-ups for my heart health?
- What can you do to help me quit smoking?
- How much physical activity do I need to help protect my heart?
- What is a heart-healthy eating plan for me? Should I see a registered dietitian or qualified nutritionist to learn more about healthy eating? How can I tell if I'm having a heart attack?

Having high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol, smoking, and having had a previous heart attack, stroke, or diabetes can increase your chances of having a heart attack.

Everyone can take steps to lower their risk for heart disease and heart attack. It's time to get serious about adding a healthy diet and exercise into your daily life. A healthy lifestyle of eating healthy, staying active, being smoke-free, and getting regular check-ups is your best weapon to fight heart disease.

Know the risk factors that may increase your chances of getting heart disease.

- Alcohol
- Diet
- Blood Cholesterol Levels
- Diabetes
- Heredity
- Obesity
- Physical Activity
- Tobacco Use

## Mental Health Affects the Entire Community

The effects the community environment has on its members' mental health are only just now beginning to be understood. The negative perception of one's surroundings can in turn have negative mental health effects which can include stress. Examples of the causes of this stress are long and taxing daily commutes or behavioral patterns that separate our work or school locations from our homes.

In addition, researchers have discovered that when some people who are injured or ill are exposed to open, undeveloped land, also known as green space, they recover faster than others who are not exposed. In another study, researchers examined the cognitive functions of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to determine the effect that the children's sur-

roundings had on learning and their ability to concentrate. The researchers found that exposure to parks and other green spaces improved the children's ability to focus and concentrate.

Although the link between land use and mental health is not yet completely understood, it is clearly a topic that can affect the overall health of community members. Try to get outside for at least 10-15 minutes each day as it can help improve your overall quality of life!

# Michelle Obama's LETS MOVE! Campaign

America's Move to Raise a Healthier Generation of Kids



Visit LetsMove.gov



***"The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake."***

*- First Lady Michelle Obama at the Let's Move! launch on February 9, 2010*

## *Obesity by the numbers*

Childhood obesity in America has been on the rise. Today, almost one in every three children in our nation is overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40% of the children are overweight or obese. If we don't solve this problem, one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma.

Thirty years ago, most people led lives that kept them at a healthy weight. Kids walked to and from school every day, ran around at recess, participated in gym class, and played for hours after school before dinner. Meals were home-cooked with reasonable portion sizes and there was always a vegetable on the plate. Eating fast food was rare and snacking between meals was an occasional treat.

Today, children experience a very different lifestyle. Walks to and from school have been replaced by car and bus rides. Gym class and after-school sports have been cut; afternoons are now spent with TV, video games, and the internet. Parents are busier than ever and families eat fewer home-cooked meals. Snacking between meals is now commonplace.

Thirty years ago, kids ate just one snack a day, whereas now they are trending toward three snacks, resulting in an additional 200 calories a day. And one in five school-age children has up to six snacks a day.

Portion sizes have also exploded- they are now two to five times bigger than they were in years past. Beverage portions have grown as well- in the mid-1970s, the average sugar-sweetened beverage was 13.6 ounces compared today, kids think nothing of drinking 20 ounces

of sugar-sweetened beverages at a time.

In total, we are now eating 31 percent more calories than we were forty years ago—including 56 percent more fats and oils and 14 percent more sugars and sweeteners. The average American now eats fifteen more pounds of sugar a year than in 1970.

Eight to 18-year old adolescents spend an average of 7.5 hours a day using entertainment media, including, TV, computers, video games, cell phones and movies, and only one-third of high school students get the recommended levels of physical activity.

Now that's the bad news. The good news is that by making just a few lifestyle changes, we can help our children lead healthier lives—and we already have the tools we need to do it. We just need the will.

## *Let's Move!*

*Let's Move!* is a comprehensive initiative, launched by the First Lady, dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation, so that children born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams. Combining comprehensive strategies with common sense, Let's Move! is about putting children on the path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years. Giving parents helpful information and fostering environments that support healthy choices. Providing healthier foods in our schools. Ensuring that every family has access to healthy, affordable food. And, helping kids become more physically active.

Everyone has a role to play in reducing childhood obesity, including parents, elected officials from all levels of government, schools, health care professionals, faith-based and community-based organizations, and private sector companies. Your involvement is key to ensuring a healthy future for our children.

Visit us Online!

[www.NCHPH.org](http://www.NCHPH.org)