

West Haven Department of Public Health



Health Links



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Diabetes Maintenance and Prevention

Diabetes currently affects about 23.5 million children and adults in the U.S. according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). Equally as alarming is the fact that the age of onset (beginning) has drastically dropped. Diabetes used to be considered a disease for older persons affecting those over the age 45. This is no longer the case.

Type 1 Diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and young adults, and was previously known as juvenile diabetes. In type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin which is a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life. Only 5-10% of people with diabetes have this form of the disease. With the help of insulin therapy and other treatments, even young children with Type 1 Diabetes can learn to manage their condition and live long, healthy, happy lives. Type 2 Diabetes is the most common form of diabetes. Millions of Americans have been diagnosed with this type, and many more are unaware they are at high risk. Type 2 Diabetes is more common in African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, as well as the aged population.

In type 2 diabetes, either the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells ignore it. When you eat, the body breaks down all of the sugars and starches into glucose, which is the fuel for the cells in the body. Insulin takes the sugar from the blood into the cells. When glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells, it can lead to diabetes complications.

People with diabetes are two to three more times likely to have a stroke than those without the disease. Poorly controlled blood sugar can lead to glaucoma or blindness. Diabetes, particularly in conjunction with high blood pressure or high cholesterol can lead to heart disease. Kidney damage can result from diabetes. Nerves in the feet may become damaged sometimes leading to amputation.

There are ways to control diabetes if you have it and ways of preventing it in the first place. Both the CDC and the National Institutes of Health agree that there are two basic elements to this: exercise for at least 30 minutes per day, five days a week; and eat a healthier diet, low in fat. Pay attention to the types of foods you eat as well as portion size. Eat a variety of fruits (2 cups per day for a 2,000 calorie diet) instead of juice alone. Consume these in several forms; fresh, frozen, dried or canned. Make your veggies more colorful by adding dark green (kale, spinach, and broccoli) and bright orange (carrots, sweet potatoes, and winter squash.) Eat more calcium. The USDA recommends three cups of low-fat or fat-free milk per day. You can substitute the same amount of low-fat yogurt or low-fat cheese. Try lactose free milk if you can't digest dairy products. Focus on whole grains. Try to eat at least 3 ounces of whole grains per day. "Go lean with the protein." As the food pyramid suggests, choose lean meats such as chicken or fish. Be sure to prepare them in a healthy way such as baking or broiling.

If you take these positive steps, you can stay healthier longer and reduce your risk of Diabetes.

Public Health Web Resources

West Haven Dept. of Public Health: www.whhd.org, CT State Dept. of Public Health: www.dph.state.ct.us
CDC: www.cdc.gov American Diabetes Association: www.diabetes.org

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