

CHILDREN AND DIABETES

When you eat food, the body breaks down all of the sugars and starches into glucose, which is the basic fuel for the cells in the body. Insulin is necessary for the cells in the body to absorb glucose to make energy. Insulin takes the sugar from the blood into the cells. Diabetes increases your risk for many serious health problems, but with the correct treatment and recommended lifestyle changes, many people with diabetes are able to prevent or delay the onset of complications.

- In type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin because the cells that make insulin in the pancreas have been destroyed. A person with type 1 diabetes needs insulin shots to use the glucose from their food. Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and young adults, and was previously known as juvenile diabetes. Only 5% 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.
- In type 2 diabetes, either the body does not produce enough insulin or the body's cells ignore the insulin. Some people with type 2 diabetes need diabetes pills or insulin shots to help their bodies use glucose for energy. Insulin cannot be taken as a pill because it would be broken down during digestion just like the protein in food. It must be injected into the fat under your skin for it to get into your blood.

When glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into cells, it can lead to diabetes complications including serious long term problems with eyes (glaucoma, cataracts), feet (neuropathy, numbness), skin infections, increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure (heart attack, stroke, kidney disease), and mental health disorder.

Emergent and potentially life threatening conditions include hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia. Hyperglycemia occurs when blood glucose levels get too high, however, glucose cannot get into cells to be used for energy so stores of fat are converted for energy, causing ketones to build up quickly in the blood, potentially causing ketoacidosis (DKA). Hypoglycemia occurs when the blood glucose gets too low (typically because of too much insulin injected, or not enough food eaten). The brain can only function on glucose and if there is no glucose in the blood, you could pass out. If a diabetic passes out, they will need immediate treatment, such as an injection of glucagon or emergency treatment in a hospital.

Source: American Diabetes Association <http://www.diabetes.org/>