

WHAT CAUSES DIABETES?



Know your risks.

Although often referred to as one disease, diabetes is actually a group of diseases. While all types of diabetes mean that you have a higher than normal level of glucose in the blood, the causes and risk factors for each type are different.

Type 1 diabetes

Causes may include:¹

- › Genetics – heredity plays an important part in determining who develops type 1 diabetes. Genes are passed down from a biological parent to their child.
- › Certain environmental factors, such as viruses

Type 2 diabetes

Causes may include:¹

- › Genes and family history – certain genes may make you more likely to develop type 2 diabetes. Genes can also increase the risk of type 2 diabetes by increasing a person's tendency to become overweight or obese.
- › Overweight, obesity and physical inactivity are associated with the development of type 2 diabetes. Extra weight sometimes causes insulin resistance and is common in people with type 2 diabetes. The location of body fat also makes a difference. Extra belly fat is linked to insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, and heart and blood vessel disease.
- › Insulin resistance – type 2 diabetes usually begins with insulin resistance, a condition in which muscle, liver, and fat cells do not use insulin well.

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes may include:

- › Being age 45 or older
- › Family history of diabetes
- › Overweight or obese
- › Physical inactivity
- › High blood pressure
- › Family background that is African American, Alaska Native, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders
- › History of giving birth to a baby weighing more than nine pounds
- › History of gestational diabetes
- › Polycystic ovary syndrome, also called PCOS
- › Low level of HDL (good) cholesterol or a high level of triglycerides
- › Acanthosis nigricans, a skin condition associated with insulin resistance, characterized by a dark, velvety rash around the neck or armpits
- › History of heart disease or stroke

Together, all the way.®



Gestational diabetes

You are at greater risk for gestational diabetes if you:²

- ▶ Are older than 25 when you are pregnant
- ▶ Come from a higher-risk ethnic group, such as Hispanic American, African American, Native American, Southeast Asian or Pacific Islander
- ▶ Have a family history of diabetes
- ▶ Gave birth to a baby that weighed more than nine pounds (4 kg) or had a birth defect
- ▶ Have high blood pressure
- ▶ Have too much amniotic fluid
- ▶ Have had an unexplained miscarriage or stillbirth
- ▶ Were overweight before your pregnancy
- ▶ Gain too much weight during your pregnancy
- ▶ Have polycystic ovarian syndrome



Have questions or concerns about your risk for prediabetes and diabetes?

Talk with your doctor, who can make the appropriate recommendations based on your health history.



Sources:

1. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. "Causes of Diabetes." <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/causes> (November 2016)
2. Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia. "Gestational Diabetes." <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000896.htm> (reviewed May 16, 2016)

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