

# Diabetes in Teens

**Type 2 diabetes is on the rise in teens. Here are the symptoms of diabetes, its long-term complications, and how teens can manage their glucose levels.**

Diabetes is on the rise in all age groups. In diabetes, the blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are elevated. This disease is associated with long-term complications such as vision loss, kidney failure, and nerve and blood vessel damage.

## Types of Diabetes

Diabetes is traditionally divided into type 1 and type 2, which were once thought to affect different populations.

**Type 1 diabetes** results from destruction of cells in the pancreas that produce the hormone insulin, which regulates blood sugar and fuel metabolism. Type 1 diabetes often starts during childhood. The incidence of this type of diabetes has been steady.

**Type 2 diabetes** is associated with a reduced ability to respond to insulin (insulin resistance) along with diminished ability to produce adequate insulin to overcome this resistance. Type 2 diabetes now accounts for a large majority of the cases of the disease in this country, in all age groups. In the past decade, it has become apparent that type 2 diabetes, which used to be a disorder seen primarily in adults, is developing at an alarming rate in preteens and teens. This disease is clearly—but not always—associated with obesity and is commonly found in those with a family disorder of the disease and in those of African American or Hispanic descent.

## Signs of Diabetes

Some of the symptoms of diabetes include:

- frequent urination
- excessive thirst and hunger
- weight loss
- dehydration
- recurrent infections
- sores and cuts that are slow to heal
- irritability
- weakness and fatigue
- drowsiness
- blurry vision
- dry mouth
- dry and itchy skin
- tingling or numbness in hands and feet
- nausea and severe yeast infections in young women
- darkening of the skin around the neck or armpits (acanthosis nigricans)

**Diagnosing Diabetes:** If your child has these symptoms—especially increased urination, increased thirst and weight loss—have him checked for diabetes. Your doctor will test his blood and do a urinalysis. Some kids who are diagnosed with diabetes will have to administer glucose or take oral medications. Others can control the disease with a change in their diet and exercise routine.

### **Diabetes Treatment During the Teen Years**

If your child has already been diagnosed with diabetes, it is important to make sure that he listens to everything his doctor says. The 'tween and teen years are times of testing limits and feeling invulnerable, but being in denial about this kind of serious disease can prove disastrous down the line.

If you are having trouble getting your teen to comply with treatment, use these tips:

- Get your child involved in diabetes support groups. Learning from his peers could be invaluable.
- Don't micromanage. This could just serve to drive both of you crazy. You have to trust that your child will feel better when she manages her medicine or diet correctly.
- Let your child make as many of her own choices about the disease as she can.
- Don't see her as the disease. Try not to think of her as a diabetic all the time or let it define your relationship with her.

Source: <http://health.kaboose.com/kids-health/teens-wellness-diabetes.html>