

Which Is Worse: Type 1 or Type 2 Diabetes?

By David Edelman -

Late Update: *To be completely clear, the goal of this post is to point out how unproductive this question is. It comes up from time to time in the forums, but only leads to division. We all, regardless of type, have plenty to share with each other. Now, on to the original article.*

On our [Facebook page](#), we discussed the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes. In the process, some type 1s and type 2s both suggested that they had it worse.

Before we look at this question, let's review the difference between the two types.

The Difference Between Type 1 & Type 2

Imagine insulin is the key that opens your cells and lets sugar enter. If sugar can't enter, it builds up in the blood, makes you hungry and thirsty, and causes your body to turn to fat for energy. The symptoms of diabetes.

In type 1, your pancreas stops making keys. You need to put keys in your body (i.e. inject insulin) or sugar can't get into your cells.

In type 2 diabetes, the keyhole is rusty. You have keys, but they have trouble opening the cells. You either need more keys or a way to make the lock work better. You can take a little rust off the lock by exercising, losing weight, or taking medication.

This is an imperfect analogy, but hopefully it highlights the basic difference.

So Which Type Is Worse?

This is a maddening question. Every person is unique, and neither type is a cake walk!

- Type 1s need insulin to live – but type 2s can require enormous amounts of insulin as their resistance to it increases and their insulin production declines.
- Type 2s can walk around undiagnosed for 5 years and have complications when diagnosed. People with type 1 usually get diagnosed quickly and can take immediate action.
- But don't type 1s live with diabetes for a longer period of time? Not always! Some type 1s, like Diabetes Daily's co-founder Elizabeth, get diagnosed in their 20s, 30s, and beyond. Some type 2s are getting diagnosed as teenagers.

Lastly, let's clear up a major myth. When someone gets type 2 diabetes, it is not their fault. Type 2 diabetes has a strong genetic link (even more so than type 1). If your twin has type 2 diabetes, you have [almost a 100% chance](#) of developing it. While staying fit can substantially delay the onset of type 2 diabetes, it does not guarantee prevention. If you have the "right" genes and live long enough, you will most likely develop diabetes. And if you don't have the genes? You can gain weight and barely increase your risk at all.

Bottom Line: We Have a Lot in Common

We are an inclusive community. There are substantial differences between treating type 1 and type 2 diabetes. There are major overlaps, too. We all need to:

- Understand what's in our food
- Figure out what's going on in our bodies
- Use our insulin and medications effectively
- Have positive relationships with our medical teams
 - Stay motivated

Everyone with diabetes has to work hard to live a healthy life. Rather than worrying about what type has it roughest, let's focus on helping all our peers live a better life.

It's Your Turn!

We'd love to know your thoughts. What do we all have in common? What are the unique challenges that you're facing?