

Diabetes

Source: American Diabetes Association



U.S. Credit Bureau photo

Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about diabetes? What would you like to know?

Definitions: Resist – to fight or go against; oppose

Genetics – the science of how certain characteristics are passed on from parent to child through genes

Reading

Diabetes is a deadly disease. According to the American Diabetes Association, it is the fifth deadliest disease in the U.S., and it has no cure. Diabetes affects millions of people. There are 18.2 million people in the U.S., or 6.3% of the population, who have the disease. Nearly one-third of those people, or 5.2 million, don't know they have it.

Diabetes happens when the body does not make enough insulin or does not use it correctly. The cells of the body become resistant to insulin. Often, people with diabetes are overweight and get little or no physical exercise. This contributes to insulin resistance.

Insulin allows blood glucose, or blood sugar, to enter the cells of the body to be used for energy to keep us alive. It is a very important hormone because it aids the body's process of breaking down food, using it for energy, and storing it. The body then uses that energy for all of our bodily functions and to rid the body of waste products.

How do you know if you have diabetes? **Symptoms** of the disease include: increased thirst, weight loss, fatigue, and blurry vision. Other signs of diabetes are recurring infections, cuts or bruises that heal slowly, and tingling of the hands or feet. Contact your doctor if you have these symptoms.

Diabetes can cause many problems. The most life-threatening are heart disease and stroke. Heart disease strikes people with diabetes twice as often as people without it. Also, people with diabetes are two to four times more likely to suffer strokes. Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness in people ages 20 – 74. Each year, from 12,000 to 24,000 people lose their sight because of diabetes.

Diabetes causes kidney disease and kidney failure. It is the leading cause of end-stage renal disease. Diabetes also causes nerve disease. It is the most frequent cause of lower-limb amputations. The risk of leg amputation is 15 – 40 times greater for a person with diabetes. Each year more than 82,000 amputations are performed among people with diabetes.

The number of persons with diabetes is growing at an alarming rate. In the U.S., there are one million new cases of diabetes diagnosed every year in people aged 20 years or older. The number of cases in children and youth is also growing.

Many children and young people have poor eating habits, are overweight, and do not exercise. These factors cause diabetes no matter what your age. There is a direct link between the degree of obesity and the risk of developing diabetes.

Diabetes is not contagious. It can't be caught like a cold or the flu. Diabetes is not caused by eating too much sugar. It is caused by genetics and lifestyle factors. Diabetes can be prevented or delayed with a healthy lifestyle. The key is to maintain a healthy weight, eat sensibly, and exercise regularly.

Understanding

1. What is glucose? _____

2. What does the word **symptom** mean? _____

3. Why are we seeing a greater numbers of diabetes cases in youth and children? _____

4. How can the disease be prevented? _____

5. How can it be cured? _____

6. What is insulin? _____

7. What health problems associated with diabetes surprised you the most? Why? _____

8. Who is at risk for developing the disease? _____

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Write about your experience with diabetes. Do you or someone you know have the disease?
How has it affected the person's life?
