

Diabetes alert: What to look for at a glance



The complications of diabetes develop gradually. When too much sugar stays in the blood stream for a long time, it can affect the blood vessels, nerves, eyes, kidneys and cardiovascular system. Complications may include heart attack and stroke, severe foot infections (leading to gangrene, which may result in amputation) and end-stage kidney failure among others. After 10–15 years of onset, the prevalence of all diabetes-related complications increases markedly. More than 80 percent of type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed by reducing the risk factors and adopting a healthier lifestyle.¹

However, diabetes doesn't hide that well if you're vigilant. There are numerous ways for you to know if you have diabetes. If you don't know your blood glucose levels, see your healthcare provider as soon as possible to take a fasting blood test. If you have any of the symptoms or risk factors below, check those off and bring them to the attention of your doctor.

Important numbers to know (your blood glucose levels) ²	Examples of symptoms ¹	Examples of risk factors ²
<p>Normal: Fasting* blood glucose level is below 100 mg/dL (5.6 mmol/L).</p> <p>Prediabetes: Fasting blood glucose values of 100–125 mg/dL (5.6–6.9 mmol/L)</p> <p>Diabetes: Fasting blood glucose level is 126 mg/dL (7.0 mmol/L) or higher</p> <p>*Fasting means at least 8 hours without food or liquids other than water.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased urination Increased thirst Unexplained weight loss Fatigue and weakness Hunger Infections and cuts that are slow to heal Numbness, tingling, burning or intense sensitivity in certain areas of the skin, especially in the feet and legs Dry, itchy skin Frequent bladder or vaginal infections Blurred vision Impotence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family history of diabetes, particularly a mother, father, sister or brother Overweight (check with your healthcare provider) Age: your risk increases as you get older Inactivity: sedentary lifestyle High blood pressure HDL ("good") cholesterol of less than 35 mg/dL (0.9 mmol/L) and/or triglyceride level of greater than 250 mg/dL (2.8 mmol/L) Diet high in saturated fats and sugar and low in fiber Diagnosis of prediabetes or gestational diabetes when you were pregnant Smoking

Note: There are other blood tests, including a Hemoglobin A1C (or simply A1C) test. Your healthcare provider can advise you on what tests are best to track, diagnose and help manage your blood glucose levels.

Don't let diabetes impact your life. When you know what to look for, diabetes can't hide.

1. World Health Organization, "Diabetes," accessed at www.who.org/diabetes, May 15, 2020
2. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20371451>, accessed March 22, 2021

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