



## What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism — the way the body uses digested food for growth and energy. Most of the food you eat is broken down into glucose. Glucose is a form of sugar in the blood that provides energy to all your body's cells.

After digestion, glucose passes into the bloodstream, but it needs insulin to help it get into the body's cells. Insulin is a hormone made by the pancreas, a large gland near the stomach.

In people with diabetes, the pancreas makes little or no insulin, or the cells don't correctly take in the insulin that is made. When this happens, glucose builds up in the blood, overflows into the urine, and passes out of the body. That's why people with diabetes have too much glucose in their blood.

## Types of diabetes

**Type 1 diabetes** is an autoimmune disease. This means the immune system, which normally fights infections in the body, attacks a part of the body instead. With type 1 diabetes, the immune system attacks and destroys the cells in the pancreas that make insulin. No one understands why the body gets attacked this way. Type 1 diabetes comes on quickly and usually affects children and young adults.

**Type 2 diabetes** starts when the fat, muscle and liver cells in the body do not use insulin properly. The cells become resistant to insulin, and the pancreas just can't make enough insulin to move the glucose from the bloodstream into the body's cells. **Being overweight and not exercising make it more likely you will get type 2 diabetes.**

**Gestational diabetes** happens during pregnancy because of the hormones in the body at that time or not enough insulin being made. This type of diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born. Women who get gestational diabetes have a higher risk of getting type 2 diabetes later in their life.

## The good news about diabetes

Fifty years ago, 1 in 5 people with type 1 diabetes didn't live more than 20 years after being diagnosed with the disease. Today, they are living longer and healthier because of the advanced tools that help them control their sugar levels much better.

We are learning more and more about the causes of type 2 diabetes as well. Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90% of the diabetes cases in the U.S. It is known that being overweight or obese significantly increases your chance of getting type 2 diabetes. Knowing how to manage the health factors that can be controlled is very important. Eating healthy and staying active are keys to avoiding this disease.



**Read more about diabetes at [anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com).  
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Sources:  
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