

Diabetes Fact Sheet 2008



diabetes
new zealand

Source: Ministry of Health

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic condition that arises when the pancreas does not make enough insulin, or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin produced. Insulin enables cells to take in glucose from the blood and use it for energy.

There are three types of diabetes:

Type 1 diabetes

- Occurs when the pancreas is unable to produce sufficient insulin for the body's needs. It is an auto immune disorder and not a lifestyle disorder
- There is currently no known way to prevent or cure it
- Most people develop it as children or teenagers but it can appear at any age
- It is managed by insulin therapy taken by regular injections 3-4 times daily
- Approximately 11,000 people in New Zealand have Type 1 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes

- Occurs when the body is unable to use the insulin the pancreas produces
- This is a lifestyle condition and in many cases can be prevented
- It can exist for many years before any symptoms occur
- People are likely to have a family history of Type 2 diabetes
- People over 40 years who are overweight or inactive (especially Maori, Pacific Island or Asian people) are more at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes
- 85% of people with Type 2 diabetes manage it with diet and oral medication
- Around 15% of people with Type 2 diabetes require insulin therapy taken by injection
- Approximately 105,000 people in New Zealand have been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. It is estimated that 115,000 are undiagnosed, and 300,000 are at risk.

Gestational diabetes

- Occurs in some pregnant women
- Blood glucose levels usually return to normal once the baby is born, but women with gestational diabetes are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes later in life
- Diabetes in pregnancy remains a leading cause of congenital abnormalities, stillbirths and miscarriages.

Managing Diabetes

- A blood test is the only way of testing for diabetes. Because the risk of diabetes increases with age, regular testing is advised, particularly those known to be at risk.
- Poorly controlled diabetes, whether Type 1 or Type 2, can result in debilitating complications including blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, neuropathy, lower limb amputations and, for men, impotence.
- Keeping blood glucose levels stable by eating healthy food, keeping active, maintaining a healthy weight, and taking medication if needed, reduces the chances of diabetes complications.
- By eating healthy food, doing regular physical activity, and losing weight if you are overweight, you can reduce the likelihood of developing Type 2 diabetes.
- People with diabetes should have regular check ups to ensure their blood glucose levels are within control and also that the eyes, kidneys and heart are functioning properly. When blood glucose levels are higher, a person is more likely to develop complications. Early detection with appropriate medical intervention can minimise complications. People with diabetes are entitled to a free annual check up.

Incidence and Costs in New Zealand

- An estimated 116,000 people in New Zealand have been diagnosed with diabetes. More than \$170 million is spent each year in the public health system on diabetes. Most of this money is spent dealing with diabetes-related complications.
- Currently around one in 32 New Zealand Pakeha adults has known diabetes (3.1 percent); and one in 12 Maori (8.3 percent) and one in 12 Pacific Island adults (8.1 percent) have known diabetes.
- In 2020 (with no change in risk factors, except obesity) one in 22 New Zealand Europeans/Pakeha adults will have known diabetes (4.5 percent); and one in six Maori adults (16.4 percent) and one in six Pacific Island adults (17.6 percent) will have known diabetes. That is a 31% increase in incidence in Pakeha/European people and a 50% increase for Maori and Pacific Peoples.