

What is Diabetes?



Diabetes is a group of diseases characterized by high levels of blood glucose due to defects in the production of insulin, insulin action, or both. There are three major types of diabetes:

- **Type I diabetes** occurs when the body does not produce insulin. This form usually occurs in children and young adults, and requires insulin injections.
- **Type II diabetes** occurs due to insulin resistance combined with insulin deficiency. This form is usually associated with older age, obesity, family history, high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia, and coronary artery disease. Type II can generally be controlled with diet, exercise, and oral drugs.
- **Gestational diabetes** is a form of glucose intolerance developed during pregnancy.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Provide** education, adaptive techniques, and adaptive equipment to help compensate for neuropathy and decreased sensation in hands and feet. For example, water heaters can be adjusted to a lower maximum temperature to lessen the chances of burning the skin while bathing or washing dishes.
- **Assess** a person's vision and visual-perceptual functioning. Develop adaptive techniques, equipment, and methods to address lighting and architectural barriers to enhance visual ability and safety at home and work.

What can a person with diabetes do?

- **Set** blood sugar goals with your health care team.
- **Ask** your podiatrist or doctor which socks and shoes are best for foot protection.
- **Wear** protective work gloves when working in the garden or outside.
- **Get** a dilated eye exam every year.
- **Check** your blood pressure regularly.
- **Monitor** your blood cholesterol at least once a year.
- **Ask** your health care provider for a complete foot exam at least once a year, and check feet daily for skin condition and sores.
- **Stop** smoking.
- **Remember** exercise, the invisible insulin.
- **Use** tools such as a magnifying aid to enlarge the numbers on the syringe, a buttonhook if you have difficulty with buttoning clothing, or a long-handled mirror to inspect the bottoms of your feet.

Need more information?

If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, practitioners are available through most hospitals, medical centers, and clinics.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children with a broad range of physical, developmental, and

behavioral conditions in addition to diabetes. Occupational therapy practitioners also advise people in home modification and in preventing falls, and help clients in wellness techniques that may prevent injury and disease.

Contact your doctor or local health organizations for more information.

 The Fund To
Promote Awareness of
Occupational Therapy