



# Diabetes: what is it?

Information to improve your health from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama

People with diabetes have a hard time controlling their blood sugar levels, either because they do not have enough of a hormone called insulin, or because their body has become resistant to the effect of insulin. When blood sugar levels in

your body rise too high, it can cause disastrous physical symptoms. Common symptoms of diabetes may include increased urination, unquenchable thirst, increased fatigue and unexplained weight loss.

## Diabetes & You

To help control diabetes, take care of yourself. Get your flu shot every year, and remember it's easier it to control your symptoms if you understand their causes.

Remember, the best way to control chronic conditions like diabetes is to stay on top of maintenance and prevention. The purpose of this newsletter is to help you achieve these goals. We hope you find this information helpful.

**Thank you for reading!**



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# What to Do With Those Lancets

Used syringes and lancets, sometimes called sharps, can be an environmental hazard. You can't simply toss them in the garbage like any other waste, so what do you do?

One option is to get a sharps container from a hospital or your doctor. Some providers may offer these to their patients. They can also be purchased at many pharmacies and other medical equipment suppliers.



Another option is to make your own sharps container. Recycle a used liquid detergent container with a screw-on lid. Place some masking tape on the front of your container and label it with the words "HAZARD: SHARPS – DO NOT RECYCLE" in permanent marker.

Keep your sharps container in a safe place where pets can't knock it down, and children won't get into it. Only open the container when

inserting new sharps. Once your sharps container is full, you'll need to take proper steps to dispose of your waste.

## ***These steps are recommended for Alabama residents:***

1. **FILL** the container with a solution that is one part bleach to ten parts water. Make sure this covers any sharps.
2. **ALLOW** container with needles and bleach solution to sit at least 20 minutes for sterilization.
3. **POUR** bleach solution down sink; be careful not to pour out your sharps.
4. **CLOSE** your sharps container and seal it tightly.
5. **WRAP** duct-tape around the top of your container to lock it in place.
6. **TOSS** container into your garbage for disposal. (DO NOT PUT IN RECYCLE BIN!)

*NOTE: If you live outside of Alabama, there may be additional requirements for disposing of sharps. Many states and counties request sharps be disposed of by bringing them to facilities specifically designed for handling them. Contact your local health department or a local pharmacist if you have questions.*



# Don't Sweat It

Excessive sweating. It's a topic we rarely bring up in casual conversation. When excessive sweating happens, it can be flat-out embarrassing.

Sweating is a completely normal biological process all human beings experience, and there's no need to be ashamed. However, people with diabetes may have underlying symptoms making them sweat.

## **There are three kinds of sweating disorders common among people with diabetes:**

### **Hyperhidrosis**

This is excessive sweating, typically unrelated to exercise or air temperature. Hyperhidrosis may happen when your blood sugar drops. Maintaining good blood sugar levels may prevent this type of sweating.

### **Gustatory Sweating**

In the south, it's sometimes affectionately referred to as "the meat sweats." Basically, this kind of sweating occurs after eating a particular food (such as extra-spicy Buffalo wings) or a particularly heavy meal. Often, the easiest way to prevent this type of sweating is to simply take note of those foods which cause the sweating, and then learn to avoid those foods or enjoy them in moderation.

### **Night Sweats**

This is sweating that occurs in the middle of the night, when you wake up in a pool of your own sweat. It can be caused by your body's blood sugar dropping while you sleep. Like with hyperhidrosis, controlling your blood sugar may prevent this.

In addition to controlling your blood sugar and watching what you eat, simply maintaining a healthy weight may reduce how much you sweat. Extra weight on the body can cause excessive sweating. Medications are also available to help. Talk to your doctor for details.

*NOTE: If your sweating becomes problematic and can't be relieved without assistance, please talk to your doctor. Excessive sweating can be a sign of additional medical problems which may need to be addressed.*

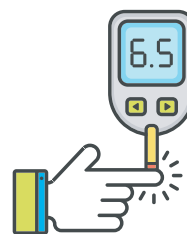
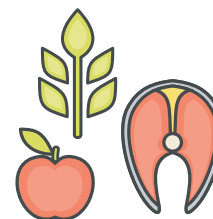
# Diabetes Facts Vs. Fiction

There's a lot of information out there about diabetes. Unfortunately, not all of that information can be trusted. Before believing something you read, hear or see, always look a little deeper.

Is it a nationally-recognized health organization or non-profit foundation trying to increase awareness, or are you looking at a for-profit website or advertisement designed to sell the latest miracle cure? Is the person giving the information an expert in their field like a registered nurse or doctor? Before accepting information as truth, always consider the source.

**The table below outlines 9 common statements about diabetes and weeds out facts from fiction.**

FICTION	THE FACTS
<b>Diabetes isn't that big a deal.</b>	Diabetes can be a huge deal! Diabetes almost doubles your chance of having a heart attack. This condition causes more deaths a year than breast cancer and AIDS combined.
<b>If you have diabetes, you can't eat normal foods.</b>	People with diabetes should limit added sugars and saturated fats – but so should everybody else! People with diabetes benefit from the same healthy diet as anyone. We should all enjoy a diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruits and lean proteins.
<b>I can't get diabetes because no one in my family has diabetes.</b>	While type 1 diabetes is usually genetic, genes are only one piece of the puzzle. Additional risk factors for diabetes include poor eating habits, lack of exercise, ethnicity, high blood pressure, poor cholesterol, obesity, depression, heart disease and other factors.
<b>People only get diabetes if they eat too much sugar.</b>	It's true an unhealthy diet full of added sugar in foods and drinking unhealthy sodas can contribute to developing diabetes. However, poor diet is just one potential cause. People with type 1 diabetes are often born with the disease in their genes. People who develop type 2 may have the disease in their genes, an unhealthy lifestyle, other underlying health problems, or a combination of factors.
<b>People with diabetes shouldn't play sports or exercise.</b>	Not only is this untrue, it's a dangerous statement. Exercising is one of the best things you can do for your body! Living an active lifestyle can help your body maintain healthy blood sugar levels. Many professional athletes and adventurers have a diabetes diagnosis.
<b>You can't have a baby if you have diabetes.</b>	Women with well-maintained and controlled diabetes can have full-term pregnancies and healthy babies. If you get pregnant, your doctor can help you develop a healthy pregnancy plan.
<b>You can feel it when your blood sugar level drops.</b>	Not always. That's why it's important to closely monitor your blood sugar levels.
<b>You know you have diabetes because of your symptoms.</b>	Diabetes can creep up slowly and silently. This is why routine preventive services – such as having your blood sugar checked – are important. Some people develop diabetes without ever feeling a single symptoms.
<b>People with diabetes get sick more often.</b>	Illnesses like cold and flu can happen to anyone, whether they have diabetes or not. People with diabetes should get routine physicals and the annual flu vaccine, just like everyone else. People with diabetes may experience more complications from wounds, especially to the lower legs and feet. Proper foot and wound care are extremely important.



We offer members a support system to help manage any chronic condition, as well as preventive measures to take better care of yourself. Call **1-888-841-5741** for more information on these services.



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