



# 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 because they do not have enough of a hormone called 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 and unexplained weight loss.

## Diabetes and You

To help control diabetes, it's important to reinforce good eating habits. In addition, get moving; daily exercise is one of the best ways to combat diabetes and a cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle for all age groups.

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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## Comparing Two Forms of Diabetes

There are two types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. People with either type have a hard time controlling their blood sugar levels because they do not have enough of a hormone called insulin. The table below explains the differences in the types of diabetes.

TYPE 1 DIABETES	TYPE 2 DIABETES
Least common. Only 5-10 percent of total cases are type 1.	More common. 90-95 percent of people with diabetes have type 2.
Symptoms usually become first apparent during childhood or adolescence. Type 1 is sometimes called “juvenile diabetes.”	Usually not diagnosed in children. This type of diabetes is usually diagnosed among adult populations. However, the childhood obesity epidemic has been blamed for an increasing number of cases of this type of diabetes in young people.
People with type 1 frequently endure episodes of low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia.	Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar episodes are rare unless the person has to take insulin or some other diabetic medicines.
Type 1 diabetes is not preventable. Typically, type 1 diabetes is a genetic condition passed on from other family members.	Type 2 diabetes may be prevented through a healthy lifestyle, by maintaining a healthy weight, eating a healthy diet and regular exercise.

### TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

It’s important to come prepared for every doctor’s appointment. If you’ve been diagnosed with diabetes, be sure to ask about the following:

- Blood glucose levels measured at least once a year with HbA1c blood test
- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Eye screening for retinopathy
- Skin, circulation and nerve supply of your legs and feet
- Kidney function testing including a urine test for protein and a blood test to measure kidney function
- Body weight/body mass index (BMI)
- Lifestyle issues such as smoking, diet and exercise



## Healthy Food Choices

Eating healthy is your best bet to control diabetes and prevent future complications.

Generally speaking, a healthy diet for someone with diabetes will be based on whole foods and limit the amount of carbohydrates you eat, specifically sugar. To create a healthy plate, consider filling half of your plate with non-starchy, low-carb vegetables; for the other half, divide it between some combination of lean protein, low-fat or fat-free dairy, whole grains, healthy fruits, seeds, and nuts.

**Use the table at right to make informed decisions about different food groups.**

*Please note that even “bad” foods can be okay in moderation, but it is generally going to be more beneficial for your overall health to eat foods off the “good” foods list.*

## Hit the Road

**Getting up and getting moving can be great for your overall health and well-being. If you’re suffering from cabin fever, get out! Traveling can boost your mood and help you feel better. However, if you have diabetes, you may need to take certain precautions before hitting the road.**

**Pack your medicines.** Remember to pack an adequate supply of your daily medicines, and keep this with you at all times. Consider packing more medicine than you need just in case your travel time gets extended due to delays or bad weather.

**Consider your dietary needs.** Be sure to pack some healthy snacks for your trip. Gas stations and rest stops may not have much in the way of healthy options. Most modern airports will have some healthy options available, but plan your food needs accordingly. Also, plan which restaurants where you want to dine once you reach your destination ahead of time. Do your research and check nutritional content so you can stick to your healthy eating plan.



**Get moving.** Just because you’re enjoying some down time doesn’t mean you should just sit down the whole time! Don’t forget to exercise while you travel. Most hotels are equipped with fitness centers. Or simply enjoy a walk around the city’s zoo or park system. Walking is a great way to experience a new place.

*Living with diabetes has its challenges, but with proper preparation, you can still satisfy your adventurous side and travel!*

	“GOOD” FOODS	“BAD” FOODS
<p><b>PROTEINS</b> Protein is great for feeling satiated (full) after eating and feeding your muscles. However, it’s best to try to avoid excess salt (which can cause spikes in blood pressure) and unhealthy fats which can lead to unhealthy outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatty fish, like salmon</li> <li>• Eggs</li> <li>• Canned fish, like tuna in water</li> <li>• Beans</li> <li>• Nonfat plain yogurt</li> <li>• Raw, unsalted nuts</li> <li>• Lean skinless chicken</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deli meats</li> <li>• Hot dogs</li> <li>• Beef jerky</li> <li>• Sausages</li> <li>• Pepperoni</li> <li>• Bacon</li> <li>• Fatty red meats</li> </ul>
<p><b>GRAINS</b> Look for whole grains that are high in fiber, vitamins, minerals and healthy phytochemicals. Avoid processed refined grains or foods with added sugars.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quinoa</li> <li>• Wild or brown rice</li> <li>• Whole-grain cereals</li> <li>• Plain oatmeal</li> <li>• Whole-grain breads</li> <li>• Whole-wheat pizza</li> <li>• Whole-grain or veggie pastas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White bread</li> <li>• Sugary desserts or pastries</li> <li>• Donuts</li> <li>• White rice</li> <li>• White pasta</li> </ul>
<p><b>DAIRY</b> Look for fat-free options and enjoy this in moderation. Avoid chocolate milk, other sweetened dairy drinks and other dairy items with added sugar, like ice cream.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skim milk</li> <li>• Plain nonfat yogurt</li> <li>• Nonfat cottage cheese</li> <li>• Reduced fat cheeses</li> <li>• Nonfat or low-fat sour cream</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-fat cheeses</li> <li>• Flavored yogurts with sugar</li> <li>• Regular sour cream</li> <li>• Ice cream</li> </ul>
<p><b>VEGETABLES</b> Fresh vegetables are best, but frozen retain similar nutritional value and can be enjoyed year-round. While not necessarily “bad,” limit starchy vegetables which can be high in simple carbohydrates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greens (mustard, collards, etc.)</li> <li>• Brussels sprouts</li> <li>• Broccoli</li> <li>• Asparagus</li> <li>• Cauliflower</li> <li>• Cabbage</li> <li>• Onions</li> <li>• Artichokes</li> <li>• Peppers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corn</li> <li>• Yams</li> <li>• White potatoes</li> <li>• Sweet potatoes</li> <li>• Peas</li> </ul>
<p><b>FRUIT</b> All fruits have carbohydrates, so these should have a limited role in your overall diet. But don’t ignore this food group! Fruits can be a great source of vitamins, fiber, and can help you sooth a sweet tooth in a healthy way. Just be sure to avoid fruit juices (they lack beneficial fiber) and dried fruits as they contain a large amount of sugar.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blueberries</li> <li>• Strawberries</li> <li>• Raspberries</li> <li>• Apples</li> <li>• Cherries</li> <li>• Peaches</li> <li>• Oranges</li> <li>• Pears</li> <li>• Kiwi fruit</li> <li>• Grapes</li> <li>• Bananas</li> <li>• Watermelon</li> <li>• Cantaloupe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raisins</li> <li>• Dried cranberries</li> <li>• Prunes</li> <li>• Orange juice</li> <li>• Apple juice</li> <li>• Canned fruits in syrup</li> </ul>
<p><b>FATS</b> Fat in the diet is not a bad thing. It can help you control food cravings and even help you control your blood sugar. The problem comes when the fat you consume is a bad or unhealthy fat. Try to avoid foods with trans fats, saturated fats, or foods that mention “hydrogenated” oils on ingredient lists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nuts</li> <li>• Nut butters</li> <li>• Avocados</li> <li>• Olives</li> <li>• Edamame (soybeans)</li> <li>• Olive oil</li> <li>• Sesame oil</li> <li>• Sunflower oil</li> <li>• Flax seeds</li> <li>• Chia seeds</li> <li>• Fatty fish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red meat</li> <li>• Palm oil</li> <li>• Cakes</li> <li>• Fast food fries</li> <li>• Packaged snacks (chips)</li> <li>• Full-fat milk</li> <li>• Full-fat cheeses</li> <li>• Coconut oil</li> <li>• Cookies</li> <li>• Muffins</li> <li>• Donuts</li> </ul>

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.

# Consider us your support system.

We're here to help you manage your chronic condition. And we can suggest preventive measures that will help you take better care of yourself.

Connect with your Care Coordinator today.

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