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SENIOR HEALTH

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# Diabetes

## KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

The most common type of diabetes in adults is Type II, or noninsulin-dependent diabetes. Normally, sugars and starches are turned into glucose (a simple sugar) during digestion. Insulin, which is produced by the pancreas, feeds the glucose to the cells until blood sugar levels fall.

In people with Type II diabetes, insulin is present, but it can't communicate with the cells and, eventually, the pancreas begins having problems producing insulin. This leads to a high blood sugar level, which can lead to blood vessel abnormalities that can cause damage to the kidneys, nerves and heart. Why this type of diabetes develops is not completely understood. Heredity seems to be a big influence, as well as age, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle.

### **THOSE MOST AT RISK ARE:**

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- age 40 or older.
- overweight.
- women who had diabetes during pregnancy.
- women who gave birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds.
- people with high blood pressure.

### **HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISK**

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- Lose excess weight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a low-fat, well-balanced diet.
- If diabetes runs in your family, get tested for the condition each year.

### **TREATMENT OF TYPE II DIABETES**

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Unfortunately, diabetes can't be cured, but it can be successfully treated. Weight control is an important factor in lowering blood sugar levels. As many as 90 percent of adults diagnosed with diabetes are overweight. Unfortunately for diabetics, weight loss is notoriously difficult, possibly due to insulin resistance affecting metabolism. Gradual weight loss is most successful. Sugar intake should be kept at a minimum. Eating a low-fat, high-fiber diet that includes whole-grains, lean meats, fruits and vegetables is a key part of treatment. Exercise is also an important component for managing diabetes. It boosts the metabolism, aids in weight loss and helps the body use insulin more effectively.

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### **WARNING SIGNS OF DIABETES**

- increased thirst***
  - extreme hunger***
  - frequent urination***
  - tingling, burning or numbness in feet and hands***
  - frequent vaginal or skin infections***
  - unexplained weight loss***
  - slow-healing cuts, especially on the feet***
  - itching***
  - fatigue***
  - blurred vision***
  - changes in weight***
  - impotence***
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