

Diabetes *it's in your hands*

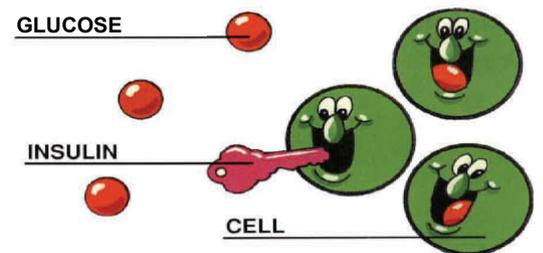
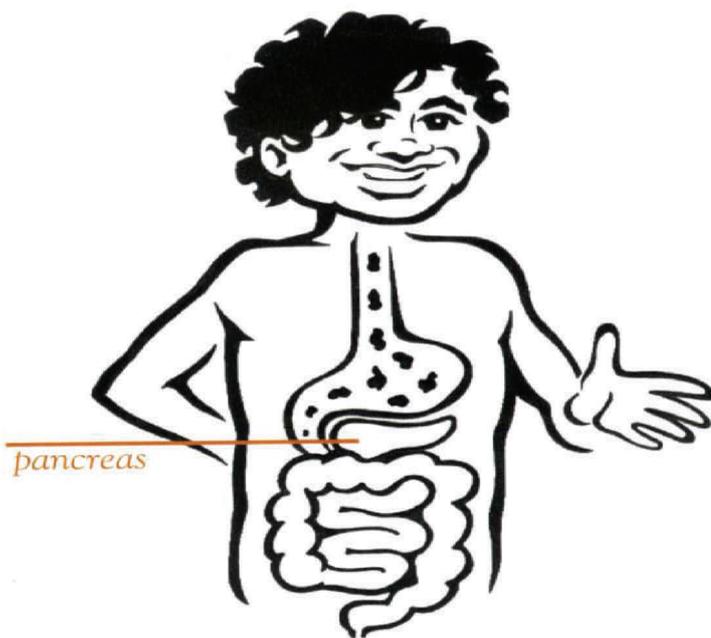
What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose (sugar) in the blood.

Here's what happens in our body:

Carbohydrates in our food provide our body with fuel for energy. These carbohydrates are found in healthy food such as breads, rice, pasta and cereals as well as other foods.

Carbohydrates are digested (broken down) in the body and released into the blood as glucose.



Images courtesy of VACCHO

Insulin, a hormone, is produced in the pancreas, and insulin helps get the glucose from the blood into the muscles to provide our bodies with energy.

In people who don't have diabetes there is a balance between glucose and insulin.

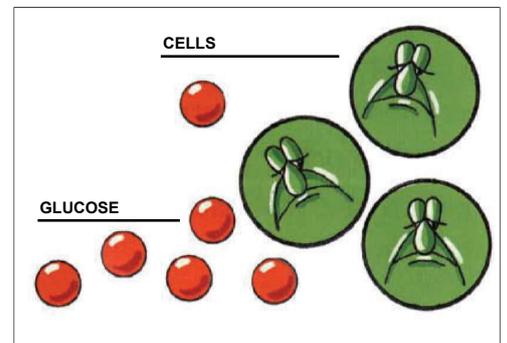
With diabetes, insulin doesn't work properly and glucose stays in the blood and does not get into the muscles and body easily. This can make the person feel tired or weak (no energy).

What types of diabetes are there?

There are 3 main types of diabetes:

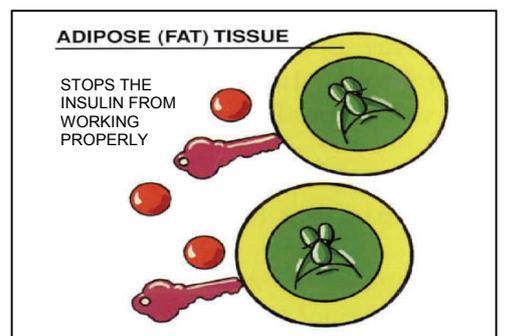
Type 1 Diabetes

Occurs when there is no insulin being produced by the pancreas. People with type 1 diabetes need insulin injections to get the glucose into the cells.



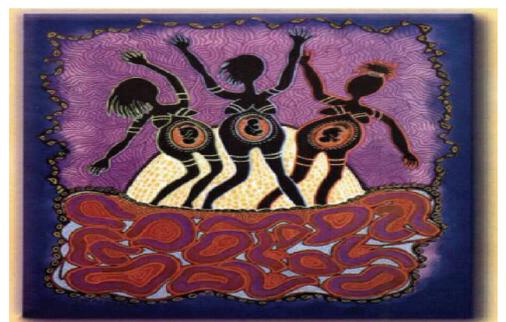
Type 2 Diabetes

Occurs when the insulin being produced is either not enough or not working properly. A healthy diet and regular exercise can help improve the insulin action but the person may also need tablets or insulin.



Gestational Diabetes

Occurs in pregnancy but usually goes away once the baby is born. Women with gestational diabetes are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes later on.



Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of diabetes in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

How would I know if I had diabetes?

You may not feel sick – type 2 diabetes can be silent. People can have diabetes for years before they have any signs.

Some of the signs of diabetes can be:

- Feeling tired (no energy) – this is because the glucose (sugar) is staying in the blood and not getting to the muscles
- Going to the toilet a lot – peeing is one way your body tries to get rid of the extra sugar in your body
- Feeling thirsty – when your body tries to get rid of the extra sugar by peeing, your body loses a lot of fluid
- Feeling itchy or rashes
- Sores that won't heal – that extra sugar in your blood is food for germs and helps them grow in numbers
- Blurry vision – when the sugar is high in your blood, the extra sugar moves from your blood into the lens of the eyes. This changes the shape of the lens in your eyes making things blurry. When the sugar level goes down the extra sugar goes out of your eyes and your sight goes back to normal.

What happens if diabetes is not treated?

High levels of glucose in the blood can damage certain body parts including the nerves and blood vessels.

This can cause:

- Heart attacks and stroke
- Loss of limbs (amputation)
- Vision impairment or blindness
- Kidney failure.

People can have fewer problems if they have regular health checks for their diabetes

Who can get type 2 diabetes?

The risk factors are:

- Having family members with type 2 diabetes
- Being older than 35
- Being overweight or carrying extra fat around your waist
- Having high blood pressure
- Having high cholesterol (fat levels) in the blood
- Having diabetes while pregnant (gestational diabetes)
- Being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island background.

If you (or your family) have one, or more, of these risk factors then get tested NOW.

This can be organised by your doctor – the blood test is usually done in a pathology service or health centre.

