

Children *and* Type 2 Diabetes



According to Mayo Clinic, type 2 diabetes is a disease more commonly associated with adults. In fact, it used to be called adult-onset diabetes. However, with the increase of childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes has also been on the rise among younger people. Inactive lifestyles and unhealthy eating habits are the two main factors leading to more cases of diabetes in children. Learn how to keep your child from developing type 2 diabetes.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease causing blood glucose, or blood sugar, to rise higher than normal. There are different types of diabetes, including type 1 and type 2. In type 1 diabetes, the body does not make insulin, a hormone the body needs to convert sugar into energy. Type 1 is not preventable. In type 2 diabetes, the body doesn't make enough insulin or it may not use it properly. Type 2 diabetes can be prevented.

Risk Factors

There are several factors which can increase your child's risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Children of African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American/Alaska Native, Asian American, or Pacific Islander descent are at higher risk for developing the disease. Having a family history of diabetes also raises risk. However, the main risk factor is being overweight.

Signs and Symptoms

Type 2 diabetes develops slowly over time. Mayo Clinic states children with type 2 diabetes often have no symptoms at all, while others may experience:

- increased thirst and urination
- increased hunger
- blurry vision
- unusual fatigue

- darkened areas of skin, most often around the neck, or in the armpits and groin
- frequent infections

Prevention

Healthy lifestyle choices can help prevent type 2 diabetes in children. Small changes can make a big difference.

- Have your child drink more water and limit sodas, juices, sports drinks, and coffee drinks.
- Offer more fruits and vegetables at meals and snack time.
- Keep healthy snacks available and avoid buying junk food.
- Get your child involved in making healthier meals with you.
- Limit fast food.
- Limit screen time to no more than two hours per day. This includes television, computer, phone, and video games.
- Get moving! Children should get an hour of physical activity most days of the week.

Screening tests for diabetes are not typically performed on children unless they have certain risk factors. If you have questions about your child and diabetes, or notice any of the signs and symptoms, talk with your child's doctor.



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