

# Type 1 diabetes: the basics

## management

### Insulin therapy

Insulin therapy is the cornerstone of treatment for type 1 diabetes. There are a variety of insulins to help manage diabetes.

Insulin can be administered by syringe, pen or pump.

Many different types of insulin are now available, offering more flexibility in the number and timing of injections you may need.

The insulin regimen your doctor prescribes will depend on your treatment goals, age, lifestyle, meal plan, general health and motivation. Social and financial factors may also be considered. Insulin also works differently in different people, depending on factors such as injection site, amount of insulin, etc.

For more information, see our fact sheet ***Insulin: Things you should know.***



When you or someone you care for is diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, you may feel scared, shocked, angry or overwhelmed. These are all normal emotions. Learning as much as you can about diabetes will reduce your fears.

### What is type 1 diabetes?

Your body gets energy by making glucose from foods like bread, potatoes, rice, pasta, milk and fruit. To use this glucose, your body needs insulin. Insulin is a hormone that helps your body control the level of glucose (sugar) in your blood.

Type 1 diabetes is a disease in which the pancreas does not produce insulin. If you have type 1 diabetes, glucose builds up in your blood instead of being used for energy.

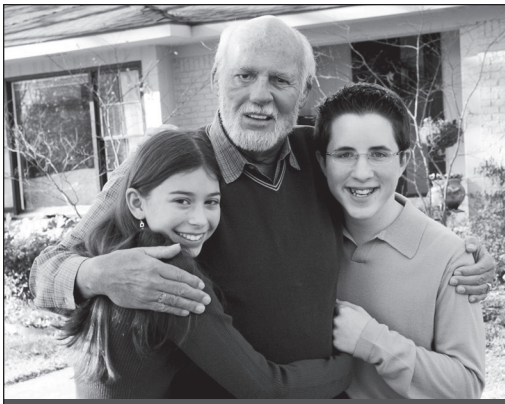
The cause of type 1 diabetes remains unknown. However, it is not preventable, and it is not caused by eating too much sugar. The body's defense system may attack insulin-making cells by mistake, but we don't know why. People are usually diagnosed with type 1 diabetes before the age of 30, most often during childhood or their teens.

### The good news

You can live a long and healthy life by keeping your blood glucose levels (the amount of sugar in your blood) in the target range set by your doctor (see our fact sheet *Managing your blood glucose*).

You can do this by:

- ◆ Taking insulin as required (and other medications, if prescribed by your doctor);
- ◆ Eating healthy meals and snacks; and,
- ◆ Enjoying regular physical activity.



## Managing your diabetes

Here are some steps you can take to manage your diabetes and help maintain your overall health and wellness – today and in the future:

- ◆ Take your insulin (and other medications) according to the regimen prescribed by your doctor;
- ◆ Check your blood glucose levels regularly and keep them within your target range;
- ◆ Follow a balanced meal plan;
- ◆ Be physically active;
- ◆ Keep your cholesterol and other blood fats in your target range;
- ◆ Maintain a healthy weight;
- ◆ Keep your blood pressure at or close to target level;
- ◆ Manage your stress effectively;
- ◆ Take care of your feet;
- ◆ Don't smoke; and,
- ◆ Regularly visit your dentist, eye care specialist (every year) and doctor.

## Additional resources

For more information about insulin, see our fact sheet ***Insulin: Things you should know***.

For more information on managing your blood glucose levels and recognizing and treating low and high levels, see our fact sheets ***Managing your blood glucose*** and ***Lows and highs: blood glucose levels***.

## Complications of diabetes

Over time, high blood glucose levels can cause complications such as blindness, heart disease, kidney problems, nerve damage and erectile dysfunction. Fortunately, good diabetes care and management can prevent or delay the onset of these complications.

## Your diabetes healthcare team can help

Your diabetes healthcare team can answer all your questions about the best way to manage your diabetes. Depending on your needs and the resources available in your community, your team might include a doctor (your family doctor or a diabetes specialist), and diabetes educators (nurse and dietitian).

Your team may also include:

- ◆ Pharmacist
- ◆ Social worker
- ◆ Psychologist
- ◆ Foot care specialist
- ◆ Endocrinologist
- ◆ Eye care specialist

**Remember: the most important member of your healthcare team is you.**

## Get the support you need

You may have a difficult time accepting that you or a family member has type 1 diabetes. A positive and realistic attitude toward diabetes can help you manage the condition.

Talk to others who have type 1 diabetes or who care for children with the condition – ask your local Canadian Diabetes Association branch about additional resources, joining a peer-support group or taking part in an information session.

*The Canadian Diabetes Association works in communities across the country to promote the health of Canadians and eliminate diabetes through our strong nationwide network of volunteers, employees, healthcare professionals, researchers, partners and supporters. In the struggle against this global epidemic, our expertise is recognized around the world. The Canadian Diabetes Association: setting the world standard.*

**diabetes.ca**  
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Diabetes**  
Association