

Diabetes: Fact or Fiction?



Diabetes rates are rising, and so are the many myths surrounding the disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 8 million people are **undiagnosed** diabetics. With that in mind, everyone should know the facts concerning this chronic condition. Below are some of the truths and misconceptions about diabetes.

TRUE OR FALSE: DIABETES IS NOT AS BAD AS CANCER OR AIDS

FALSE. According to the American Diabetes Association, every year, there are more diabetes-related deaths than breast cancer and AIDS combined. Many are due to severe medical complications associated with the disease. Diabetes is a progressive, deadly disease, but it can be treated if diagnosed early and well managed with the help of your primary care physician.

TRUE OR FALSE: MORE THAN 25 PERCENT OF DIABETES CASES REMAIN UNDIAGNOSED

TRUE. According to the National Diabetes Statistics Report, 29.1 million people, or 9.3 percent of the United States population, have diabetes. In addition, 27.8 percent of diabetes cases, or 8.1 million people, are undiagnosed. For this reason, it's imperative to schedule and keep annual check-ups and physical examinations.

TRUE OR FALSE: EXCESS BODY WEIGHT IS TYPICALLY THE CAUSE OF TYPE 2 DIABETES

FALSE. Not only overweight people will develop diabetes. Many people with diabetes are not obese. Family history, ethnicity, and age are risk factors, along with weight. Most people are unaware of these associations and may ignore diabetes symptoms.

TRUE OR FALSE: DIABETES CAN LEAD TO BLINDNESS

TRUE. Patients with diabetes are at risk for blindness and severe vision problems. Blood glucose control, hypertension, and genetics play a role in determining whether people with diabetes will develop blindness or other vision problems. Appropriate blood sugar control will significantly reduce the chance of vision degeneration.



TRUE OR FALSE: ALL PATIENTS WITH DIABETES MUST BE TREATED WITH INSULIN

FALSE. While everyone with type 1 diabetes must use insulin (because their bodies don't produce insulin), some people with type 2 can control it with a healthy diet and exercise. However, some may be required to supplement this with oral medication instead of insulin to maintain healthy blood sugar levels. The need for insulin could arise if the disease progresses.

TRUE OR FALSE: PATIENTS WITH DIABETES ARE AT AN ELEVATED RISK FOR FLU AND PNEUMONIA

FALSE. However, patients with diabetes are less able to establish control over these illnesses. They are more likely to die from flu and pneumonia than people without the disease. People with diabetes should get appropriate flu and pneumonia shots as an easy and effective precaution.

TRUE OR FALSE: PATIENTS WITH DIABETES REQUIRE A SPECIAL DIET FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES

FALSE. Patients with diabetes need to follow a healthy meal plan, not a special diet. Once diagnosed, patients with diabetes will likely need to make simple alterations to their food patterns to eat less processed foods and saturated fats. They will need to be conscious of the amount of sugar they consume, particularly in sweet drinks and sodas.

TRUE OR FALSE: SUGAR-FREE FOODS ARE GENERALLY DIABETES-FRIENDLY

FALSE. Many sugar-free foods are calorie-laden and not consistent with diabetic weight loss programs. They also may contain large amounts of carbohydrates, which break down into sugar. With diabetes on the rise, so are marketing efforts toward people with the disease, so be sure to read labels carefully.

TRUE OR FALSE: I EAT A LOT OF SUGAR, SO I AM WORRIED I'LL GET DIABETES

FALSE. Eating sugar does not cause diabetes. But you should still cut back on sweets and sugary beverages.

Type 2 diabetes is a serious disease, and because there are often no symptoms, early screening may help you avoid the more severe complications caused by having the disease without knowing it.

**Learn the facts about your health;
it'll save your life.**

