



What is Diabetes? Know the Basics

You likely know someone with diabetes. It's a chronic illness that affects people of all ages. There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, and gestational. All forms of diabetes prevent the body from effectively managing blood sugar levels, however, the onset and duration of the disease differ:

Type 1 Diabetes	is oftentimes genetic, caused by an autoimmune response that damages the cells that produce insulin in the body. It's not preventable, but it's very treatable.
Type 2 Diabetes	develops over time and is linked to diet and lack of exercise. People who have type 2 diabetes have insulin resistance, which prevents the body from appropriately responding to insulin.
Gestational Diabetes	happens during pregnancy. It prevents the body from using insulin efficiently, and ends after pregnancy.

Untreated or mismanaged diabetes may lead to complications impacting the feet, nerves, heart, and eyes. It is critically important to follow your doctor's orders if you're diagnosed with any type of diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is a preventable condition, unlike type 1 and gestational diabetes. Your healthcare provider may screen you for type 2 diabetes if you have risk factors, a family history, or you're due for a regular screening. Many people learn they have prediabetes during these screenings. Prediabetes is a condition where blood sugar is higher than it should be, but not high enough for a diabetes diagnosis. If you have prediabetes, you may be able to use these tips to prevent your condition from progressing to type 2 diabetes:



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- **Get moving.** Muscles use sugar to create energy. Building muscle mass can help better manage blood sugar levels.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), weight loss helps manage blood sugar levels.
- **Make each meal count.** People with prediabetes are encouraged to carefully monitor their blood sugar levels for any spikes which can be dangerous. It is advisable to consult with a dietitian and/or a healthcare professional provider to determine which foods are best for your diet and overall health.
- **Partner with your healthcare provider.** Your healthcare provider can help you develop a plan to lower blood sugar levels to help prevent your chances of developing type 2 diabetes.
- **Talk about diabetes with your family.** If type 2 diabetes runs in your family, you should talk to your doctor about it. These discussions can help you understand your level of risk or help you learn how to prevent it from advancing.

Partner with your Primary Care Physician (PCP) for diabetes questions or concerns. If you do not have a PCP, you may call the Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card or [log on to Blue Access for MembersSM \(BAMSM\) bcbsil.com](#) and use the Provider Finder. This fast, easy-to-use tool improves members' experience when searching for in-network healthcare providers.



TECHNOLOGY: DIABETES MANAGEMENT MADE EASY

Advances in treatment and technology make managing diabetes more convenient. Diabetics used to solely rely on test strips and finger pricks for monitoring blood sugar at home. That is no longer the case. In addition to medications that are more effective at managing blood sugar, new technology makes it now easier to monitor blood sugar and manage diabetes.

CONTINUOUS GLUCOSE MONITORING (CGM):

Instead of finger pricking multiple times a day to measure blood sugar levels, CGMs monitor blood sugar using a patch. Many of them connect to smartphone apps to create reports and provide notifications about blood sugar levels to users.

SMART INSULIN PEN:

[The American Diabetes Association \(ADA\)](#)


recommends smart insulin pens for people who use insulin. The pen connects to smartphones, tracks insulin usage, and provides helpful reminders. Use the data from the insulin pen to share and discuss with your doctor as it gives a snapshot of how well you're managing both your condition and medication.

CLOSED-LOOP CGM-INSULIN PUMPS:

If you're looking for a device that monitors blood sugar and administers insulin, a closed-loop CGM-insulin pump is a great choice. This technology combines CGM that keeps tabs on blood sugar levels and uses that data to automatically administer or suspend insulin to keep blood sugar at a safe level. However, in some cases, diabetics may still need to administer insulin after meals.



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 **OPTUM** Financial™ [Optum Financial](#) website for more information. If you contribute to the Health Care FSA through Optum Financial some of the medical supplies used to manage diabetes might be eligible expenses under the plan. Visit the



SOURCES: [HopkinsMedicine.org](#), [YaleMedicine.org](#), [CDC.gov](#)