

Managing adult-onset diabetes: Strategies for a healthier life

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Description

Adult-onset diabetes, commonly referred to as type 2 diabetes, is a chronic condition that affects how the body processes glucose, leading to elevated blood sugar levels. Unlike type 1 diabetes, which typically manifests in childhood or adolescence, type 2 diabetes usually develops in adulthood, although it is increasingly being diagnosed in younger populations due to rising obesity rates and lifestyle factors.

When the pancreas is unable to produce enough insulin or when the body becomes resistant to insulin, type 2 diabetes develops. A hormone called insulin aids cells in absorbing blood glucose for energy. When this mechanism is disturbed, blood glucose levels rise, which eventually causes a number of health issues.

■ Risk factors

Type 2 diabetes risk can be raised by a number of factors, including:

Obesity: Excess body fat, particularly around the abdomen, contributes to insulin resistance.

Sedentary lifestyle: Physical inactivity is a significant risk factor, as regular exercise helps regulate blood sugar levels.

Age: The risk of developing type 2 diabetes increases with age, particularly after 45.

Family history: A family history of diabetes can increase the likelihood of developing the condition.

Ethnicity: Certain ethnic groups, including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and some Asian Americans, are at a higher risk.

Unhealthy diet: Diets high in refined sugars, unhealthy fats, and low in fiber can contribute to obesity and insulin resistance.

Hormonal changes: Conditions such as Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and other hormonal disorders can increase the risk.

■ Symptoms

Many individuals with type 2 diabetes may not experience symptoms in the early stages. However, as the disease progresses, common symptoms can include:

- Increased thirst and frequent urination
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing sores or frequent infections

■ Diagnosis

Several blood tests are used to identify type 2 diabetes, including below tests.

Fasting blood sugar test: Following an overnight fast, the Fasting Blood Sugar Test measures blood sugar levels.

Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT): The oral glucose tolerance test, or OGTT, checks blood sugar levels both before and after a sweet beverage is consumed.

A1C test: The average blood sugar levels over the previous two to three months are reflected in the A1C test.

These findings will be used by a medical professional to assess if a patient has diabetes or is at risk of developing it.

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■ Management and treatment

Managing type 2 diabetes involves a multifaceted approach that may include:

Diet: Adopting a balanced diet rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins while limiting sugars and processed foods.

Exercise: Engaging in regular physical activity, aiming for at least 150 min of moderate aerobic activity per week.

Medication: If lifestyle changes alone are

insufficient, medications such as metformin, sulfonylureas, or insulin may be prescribed to help control blood sugar levels.

Monitoring: Regular monitoring of blood sugar levels is essential for managing diabetes effectively and preventing complications.

Education: Diabetes education is vital, enabling individuals to understand their condition, recognize symptoms, and make informed decisions about their health.