

Diabetes and Your Health



DeKalb Medical

This is the sixth article in a series focusing on cardiovascular disease presented by DeKalb Medical.

Do you know someone who has diabetes? According to the American Diabetes Association, an estimated 23.6 million American children and adults have some form of diabetes, yet many people don't even know they have it. Diabetes is widely recognized as one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. So what is diabetes? Diabetes is a disease in which your body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other foods into glucose (the energy needed for daily life).

Diabetes can be detected using a simple blood test to identify the level of glucose in your blood. There are three main types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes** is a disease in which your immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas. The pancreas then produces little or no insulin. Symptoms of type 1 diabetes usually develop over a short period of time and may include increased thirst and urination, weight loss, constant hunger, blurred vision and extreme fatigue.

- **Type 2 diabetes**, the most common form of diabetes, is most often associated with older age, obesity, family history, physical inactivity and certain ethnicities. Type 2 diabetes is being diagnosed more frequently in children and adolescents, especially among African American, Mexican American and Pacific Islander youth. The symptoms of type 2 diabetes develop over a longer period of time and may include increased thirst and hunger, fatigue, weight loss, blurred vision and slow healing of wounds.

- **Gestational diabetes** is a type of diabetes that

develops in late pregnancy. Although this type of diabetes usually disappears after the baby is born, it can put women at a much higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

Diabetes is associated with many long-term complications that affect almost every system in your body. Uncontrolled, the disease can lead to blindness, heart and blood vessel disease, stroke, kidney failure, amputations and nerve damage. It can also complicate pregnancy and cause birth defects. It is important for people with diabetes to take very good care of their skin and feet since diabetes can cause skin and foot complications as well.

A person with type 1 diabetes must take insulin every day to live. In addition to insulin for type 1 diabetes, the treatment for all types of diabetes consists of healthy eating, physical activity and regular monitoring of glucose levels in the blood. Some type 2 diabetics may also require one or more medications (pills, insulin or other injectable medicine) to control their blood glucose levels.

Most people with diabetes have other risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking that can increase their risk for cardiovascular disease. In fact, more than 65 percent of people with diabetes die from heart attack or stroke. By managing diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and quitting smoking, people can reduce their risk of these life-threatening conditions.



Ask The Doctor
Kevin Belcher, M.D.

HEALTHY MACARONI 'N CHEESE

Made the traditional way Mac n' Cheese can be packed with fats and calories, but this recipe is full of healthy ingredients.

- 2 cups uncooked whole-wheat elbow macaroni
- 1 Tbsp. margarine
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 small red & green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups low-fat milk
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese



- 1/2 cup fat-free sour cream
- Salt, pepper & paprika

Cook macaroni according to package directions. Drain and set aside. In large skillet, heat margarine over medium heat; sauté onion and garlic. Add bell peppers and sauté 2 more minutes, stirring constantly. Add to macaroni. In small bowl, combine milk, Parmesan, cheddar and sour cream. Add to macaroni and cook 10 minutes over medium heat, stirring constantly, until cheese is completely melted. Add salt and pepper to taste. Sprinkle with paprika.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

If you have any risk factors or symptoms of diabetes, or if you already know you have diabetes, it is important to see your

healthcare provider. With early detection, healthy lifestyle choices, regular monitoring and proper management, diabetes can be

controlled and you can stay healthy and active!

Source: American Diabetes Association