Type 2 diabetes 101

The majority of people with diabetes—almost 90 per cent of all sufferers—have Type 2, or adult onset diabetes. When you have Type 2 diabetes, your body produces insulin but is resistant to its effects either because you don't produce enough or your body can't recognize it and so doesn't use it properly. If left undiagnosed, diabetes can cause a whole host of health problems and can even be fatal.



Managing type 2 diabetes

You've received the bad news: you have Type 2 diabetes. It may be tough to digest, especially when you hear about the potential complications. The bad news is that ignoring or minimizing the condition can lead to serious health problems such as heart disease, blindness, nerve damage, thyroid and kidney problems amongst other complications.

The good news is, with a concerted effort, some lifestyle changes and help from your doctor, Type 2 diabetes is manageable. Aside from following the steps already mentioned, there are some other ways to keep your diabetes under control and continue to live an active and independent life.

Learn to manage stress. Stress can be all-consuming so prolonged periods where your stress levels are running high may prevent you from focusing on your normal diabetes management steps. When proper eating, exercising and sleeping patterns go out the window, most people will get sick. But for someone with Type 2 diabetes this can cause more serious health problems.

Check blood sugar levels regularly to ensure you are in your target range. This will lower your risk of complications and help you remain healthy. In fact, controlling your blood sugar can reduce your risk of having a diabetes-related heart attack or stroke by over 50 per cent.

Take prescribed diabetes medication. Though not everyone needs medication to manage the condition, if your doctor has prescribed it, it's for good reason.

Take care of your feet. Proper foot care is very important as foot problems—such as nerve damage and circulation issues— are common in those with diabetes and can lead to serious complications. Make sure you check your feet daily and visit your doctor if you notice anything unusual.

Avoid alcohol. Aside from the fact that too much alcohol can damage your liver and your judgement, it can also affect your body weight and may raise or lower your blood sugar to dangerous levels.

Visit your doctor, dentist and optometrist regularly to check for any complications caused by diabetes. If blood sugar levels are off, they can cause problems in the mouth and teeth that need to be treated by a dentist. Also, diabetes can cause sight problems if not managed properly, so regular visits to the optometrist are necessary.

Type 2 diabetes and children

Type 2 diabetes was once known as "adult onset diabetes" because it often developed later in life. But the increasingly activity-poor and calorie-rich lifestyles of many kids have sent childhood obesity rates soaring and child-onset Type 2 diabetes up with them.

While the idea of Type 2 management and prevention for kids is quite new, the tactics are the same. First and foremost, if you're concerned about your child's weight, talk to your family doctor. He or she can provide tips on healthy eating and suggestions for infusing more physical activity into your child's day.

If your child is diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, avoid over-reacting (and raising your child's fears), *stay positive* and focus on working together to get the diabetes under control. Since you can't always be around to monitor your child, make sure he/she is educated and involved in the management of the condition. Show

your child how to make healthy food choices, exercise, test blood sugar and encourage him or her to ask the medical support team questions at appointments.

Know the risk factors, signs and symptoms of Type 2 diabetes and always bring up any noticeable physical changes at doctor's appointments: they could be a sign of something more serious. While certain risk factors are unavoidable—such as a family history of diabetes and being over the age of 40—staying informed and making small lifestyle changes can go a long way in keeping Type 2 diabetes at bay.