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## Health Notes

### Health Notes

(From our November 2019 Issue)

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### What is Childhood Diabetes and How to Prevent Type-2 *-An active and healthy diet is great for everyone in the family*



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Did you know more than 30 million people in the US have diabetes, which is about 1 out of every 10 people, and that from 2011 to 2012 more than 5,000 children and teens were diagnosed?<sup>1</sup> November is American Diabetes Month and November 14 is World Diabetes Day, so it's a good opportunity to reflect on what causes childhood diabetes and how we can prevent it.

The CDC reports that of the children, teens and young adults who are diagnosed with diabetes, most are diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes; however, more are developing the preventable Type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes, when the body doesn't produce enough insulin, can develop at any age, and there is no known way to prevent it. Type 2 diabetes, when the body can't use insulin properly, can also develop at any age, but can be prevented in most cases.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the Type of diabetes, there are methods of managing the disease properly to avoid or delay health complications.

Type 1 diabetes is caused by an autoimmune reaction (when the body mistakenly attacks itself) that destroys the cells that make insulin in the pancreas, called beta cells. Unfortunately, this process can go on for months or even years before any symptoms appear. Parents can be on the lookout for particular symptoms that can help diagnosis a child quicker, including increased thirst and frequent urination, weight loss, fatigue, blurred vision, and slow-healing sores or frequent infections. If you notice any of these signs or symptoms, you should see your child's doctor.

Diet and lifestyle habits do not cause Type 1 diabetes, unlike Type 2.<sup>2</sup> Type 2 diabetes used to be known as adult-onset diabetes because it was commonly associated with adults only, but the rise in childhood obesity has resulted in more children being diagnosed with Type 2. Screenings are recommended for ALL children and adolescents who are overweight and have at least two other risk factors for Type 2 diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

Since Type 2 can be easily prevented in children, parents should be wary of the complications that Type 2 can cause for your child and take their diet and activity seriously to help manage the disease. Complications with Type 2 diabetes include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart and blood vessel disease, stroke, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, kidney disease, blindness, amputation, and certain skin conditions.<sup>3</sup>

The challenge for parents to keep their children healthy and happy can be overwhelming, but it sometimes requires addressing the tough stuff, such as your child's weight, eating the right diet and getting enough exercise. One of the best ways to prevent Type 2 diabetes is by eating healthier foods that

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are low in fat and calories and encouraging your child to become more active. Help them find a sport or activity, like dance lessons or karate, to incorporate more physical activity into their routines.

If you find your child is resistant to changes in their lifestyle, model your own healthy choices and make it a family affair so they do not feel isolated or punished for the new diet and activities. Plan a weekend activity outdoors together and speak openly about the new diet changes in a positive manner. By making healthier choices for you and your whole family, you have a better chance of sticking to the goals you set with your child and their doctor.

**Resources:**

- 1 <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/images/library/socialmedia/diabetes-infographic.jpg>
- 2 <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/Type1.html>
- 3 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/Type-2-diabetes-in-children/symptoms-causes/syc-20355318>

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**Luz Molina**

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