



# DIABETES AND SOUTH ASIANS

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Diabetes Mellitus (DM), also known as diabetes, is a group of diseases characterized by high blood glucose levels that result in the body's ability to produce and/or use insulin.<sup>1</sup>
  - Insulin is a hormone (chemical) produced by the pancreas.<sup>2</sup>
- The most common forms of diabetes are: Type 1; Type 2; and Gestational.
- South Asians living in the U.S. have a higher prevalence of Type 2 diabetes and Gestational diabetes than that of the general U.S. population.<sup>3</sup>
- The risk of a heart attack is higher in individuals who are diabetic.<sup>4</sup>
- Keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol in their target range (refer to your health care provider) can help prevent or delay the onset of diabetes.<sup>4</sup>
- You are at increased risk for diabetes if you are:
  - Over 45 years of age;
  - Overweight or obese;
  - A woman with gestational diabetes;
  - A person with a family history of diabetes;
  - A person with a physically inactive lifestyle; or
  - A person with high blood pressure or previous diagnosis of heart disease.

### Type 1 Diabetes

- This type of diabetes is usually diagnosed in childhood and requires treatment with insulin injections or pumps.
- The pancreas of a person with Type 1 diabetes does not make any insulin.
- Risk factors for Type 1 diabetes include genetic and environmental factors.<sup>5</sup>

### Type 2 Diabetes

- The most common form of diabetes.

- Onset is often later in life but Type 2 diabetes is being seen more frequently in adolescents and young adults due to an increase in childhood obesity and physical inactivity.
- The pancreas of a person with Type 2 diabetes makes insulin, but the body does not use the insulin properly – this is called insulin resistance.
- South Asians are at a higher risk for Type 2 diabetes because they are most likely to have fat around their waist or belly and have higher rates of insulin resistance.<sup>6,7</sup>

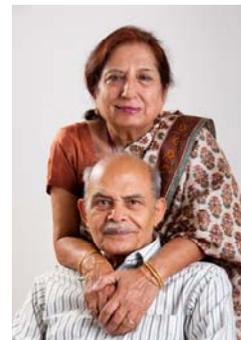
### Gestational Diabetes

- Some women develop diabetes during the late stages of pregnancy – this is known as gestational diabetes. This may lead to the onset of diabetes after the pregnancy is over.
- Gestational diabetes is caused by either the hormones of pregnancy or a shortage of insulin.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

People experiencing these symptoms should seek medical care immediately.

- Increased thirst and/or hunger;
- Unexplained weight loss;
- Frequent urination;
- Weakness or feeling tired;
- Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet;
- Blurry vision; and/or
- Skin, urinary tract, and/or vaginal infections.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day at least 5 times a week.
- Eat a healthy diet with lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Visit with your health care provider regularly and ask about getting checked for diabetes or high blood sugar.
- If you are pregnant, make sure you visit with your health care provider throughout your pregnancy.
- Do not smoke or use other tobacco products.
- Educate your community, especially children and those most at risk – about the increased risk of diabetes in South Asians.

## RESOURCES

### National

#### **American Diabetes Association**

Phone: (800) 342-2383

Website: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Phone: (800) 232-4636

Website: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

#### **Indian Foods: AAPIs Guide to Health, Nutrition & Diabetes**

Website: [www.aapiusa.org/resources/nutrition.aspx](http://www.aapiusa.org/resources/nutrition.aspx)

#### **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)**

[www2.niddk.nih.gov/](http://www2.niddk.nih.gov/)

#### **Nutritional Information to Manage Diabetes**

(Available in multiple languages)

[www.aapiusa.org/uploads/files/docs/ebook/nb\\_diabetes-info.pdf](http://www.aapiusa.org/uploads/files/docs/ebook/nb_diabetes-info.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> American Diabetes Association. Diabetes Basics. Available at: [www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics](http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics). Accessed 15 August 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Diabetes. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/learn.htm#4](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/learn.htm#4). Accessed on 15 August 2010.

<sup>3</sup> McKeigue PM, Shah B, Marmott MG. Relationship of Central Obesity and Insulin Resistance with High Diabetes Prevalence and Cardiovascular Risk in South Asians. *Lancet*, 1991, 337:382-386.

<sup>4</sup> National Institutes of Health. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. What is Diabetes? Available at: [www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/type1and2/what.htm](http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/type1and2/what.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Diabetes. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/learn.htm#4](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/learn.htm#4). Accessed on 15 August 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Raji A, Seely EW, Arky, RA, et al. Body Fat Distribution and Insulin Resistance in Healthy Asian Indians and Caucasians. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 2001, 86:5366-5371.

<sup>7</sup> Chandalia M, Abate N, Garg A, et al. Relationship Between Generalized and Upper Body Obesity to Insulin Resistance in Asian Indian Men. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 1999, 84:2329-2335.

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