

AGING ADULTS AND DIABETES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Diabetes Primer: Differences,
Treatments and Care

Managing Diabetes as Part of Senior Care

Diabetes is a disease that affects the way the body processes food, especially sugar. Many seniors have a form of diabetes, which can become serious if it isn't managed. Learn basic facts about diabetes prevention and management.

(CDC)



Types of Diabetes

There are two types of diabetes, type 1 and type 2. While type 2 is much more common, especially among aging adults, type 1 diabetes can also affect seniors.

Type 1 Diabetes

- Chronic
- Unpreventable
- Diagnosed with a blood test
- Checked on through regular blood sugar tests
- May require regular insulin injections or a pump

Type 2 Diabetes

- Chronic
- Sometimes preventable
- Diagnosed with a blood test
- Checked on through periodic blood sugar tests
- Often manageable by lifestyle and diet changes; may require medication

For seniors with type 1 diabetes, care should continue as normal. Caregivers should pay special attention for symptoms of hypoglycemia and take care to help seniors manage their disease as common parts of aging, like memory loss or lack of routine, increase the difficulty of maintaining a healthy state.

(Healthline)

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About Type 2 Diabetes and Seniors

Symptoms:

- Feeling tired
- Being unusually hungry or thirsty
- Accidental weight loss
- Frequent urination
- Blurred vision
- Skin infections
- Healing slowly from cuts and bruises

Medical Tests:

Blood tests can diagnose diabetes and sometimes even show signs of prediabetes. Seniors should be screened for diabetes at annual appointments and ask a doctor for blood tests if symptoms develop.

In some cases, medication is part of type 2 diabetes management. Ask a doctor if any medications could be helpful in preventing type 2 diabetes from worsening. Be sure a senior's caregiving team is in sync concerning diabetes care to keep blood sugar levels healthy.

[\(National Institute on Aging\)](#)



Home Care Tip

Being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes can be discouraging for seniors. The risks of worsening diabetes are serious: people sometimes require amputations. Be supportive and understanding. Find a support group or classes about type 2 diabetes to help seniors stay positive and make healthy choices.

Type 2 Diabetes Management:

- See a dietitian for help with meal planning for a healthier diet
- Get regular exercise (personal training is often discounted for seniors)
- Track glucose levels with blood tests as directed by a doctor
- Lose weight if obesity is contributing to the disease
- Choose a healthy lifestyle to decrease risks associated with diabetes like stroke (stop smoking, get more sleep, attend annual physical exams)

Type 2 Diabetes Prevention

Many people can lower their risk of type 2 diabetes by making lifestyle changes like:

- Losing weight
- Getting regular exercise
- Eating a healthy diet
- Taking prescriptions as recommended by a doctor

Seniors should take prevention very seriously if they are told they have prediabetes, which predisposes them to develop the disease.

[\(WebMD\)](#)

Type 2 Diabetes Risk Factors

Seniors are at greater risk of type 2 diabetes if they:

- Are over 65 years old
- Are overweight
- Have a family history of diabetes
- Are sedentary
- Had gestational diabetes while pregnant

[\(National Institute on Aging\)](#)