

the disease? Diabetes is quickly becoming a national epidemic and is now the third leading cause of death by disease in the U.S. An estimated 18 million Americans are currently diagnosed with this disease and that number is continuing to grow, particularly among children.

So what is diabetes? Diabetes is a condition in which the level of glucose in the blood (blood sugar) is too high. This is a result of the pancreas making no insulin, not enough insulin or, the body's cells are not able to use the insulin correctly. Insulin helps your body's cells use blood sugar. When your body does not make enough insulin, or the cells do not use it correctly, diabetes develops.

### **So.....Are you at risk?**

No one is sure what causes diabetes but research has shown us that the risk of diabetes may be higher for some people.

These risk factors include:

- A history of diabetes in the family
- Being overweight and inactive
- Being over age 45
- Being of African, Hispanic or Native American heritage
- Exposure to certain viruses that damage the pancreas
- A history of gestational diabetes (diabetes of pregnancy) or having delivered a baby weighing over 9 lb.

### **So what are the signs of diabetes?**

Signs of diabetes include the following:

- Frequent urination
- Increased thirst
- Extreme tiredness
- Weight loss (in spite of increased appetite)

- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing infections or wounds
- Pain, numbness or tingling in the feet
- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Sexual problems

Other possible signs are:

- Low levels of HDL in the blood
- High triglyceride levels

These symptoms may appear suddenly or may appear gradually over time. Also, it is unlikely that any one person would have all of these symptoms. It is also possible to have diabetes with none of these early symptoms.

## **DIABETES SELF-TEST**

If a statement is true for you, add up the number of points printed beside the statement.

1. My weight is equal to or above that listed in the chart (5)
2. I am under 65 years of age and I get little or no exercise during a usual day

(5)

3. I am between 45 and 64 years of age (5)
4. I am 65 years old or older (9)
5. I am a woman who has had a baby weighing more than nine lbs at birth (1)
6. I have a sister or brother with diabetes (1)
7. I have a parent with diabetes (1)

OVERWEIGHT CHART		Shows
Weights 20% over maximum (medium frame)		
HEIGHT (WITHOUT SHOES)	WEIGHT IN POUNDS (WITHOUT CLOTHING)	
	WOMEN	MEN
4'9"	134	
4'10"	137	
4'11"	140	
5'0"	143	
5'1"	146	157
5'2"	150	160
5'3"	154	162
5'4"	157	165
5'5"	161	168
5'6"	164	172
5'7"	168	175
5'8"	172	179
5'9"	175	182
5'10"	178	186
5'11"	182	190
6'0"		194
6'1"		199
6'2"		203
6'3"		209

Your total score:

- **3 to 9 points:** You are probably at low risk for having diabetes *now*. But don't just forget about it – you may be at risk in the future.
- **10 or more points:** You are at high risk for *having* diabetes. A doctor can order a simple blood test to find out for sure.

Source: [American Diabetes Association](#)

### **So, when should you be tested?**

All healthy adults 45 years and older should be tested for diabetes every three years. If you have risk factors, you should be screened more frequently and at an earlier age.

**Diabetes left untreated can cause life-threatening complications.**

For additional information or questions please call the HAWC at 327-8480.