



# WHAT IS DIABETES?

## Patient Education Type 2 Diabetes



### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disorder that disrupts the way your body uses glucose or sugar. All the cells in your body need glucose to work normally. Sugar gets into the cell with a hormone called insulin. If there is not enough insulin or if the body stops responding to insulin, sugar builds up in the blood. This is what happens to people with diabetes.

### What is the difference between pre-diabetes and diabetes?

Pre-diabetes simply means that there is a significant risk for developing diabetes in the future. We like to target and treat pre-diabetes with diet and exercise interventions, so that patients in our program will be less likely to develop diabetes.

### What is type 2 diabetes?

In type 2 diabetes the pancreas does not make enough insulin to meet the body's needs – but it still makes some insulin. The insulin that the body has does not work well in the body. A type 2 diabetic's body needs much more insulin to process glucose than others – this term is called insulin resistance.

### What causes type 2 diabetes?

Some of it is genetics. Many people with type 2 diabetes have a family member with the condition. Also, certain ethnic groups such as people of Hispanic, African or Asian descent are more likely to get diabetes than those of other descent. Diabetes mostly results from poor lifestyle choices – this means poor diet and exercise habits.



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## What are the symptoms of diabetes?

Most people don't experience any symptoms of diabetes unless the diabetes is severe. Those who do have symptoms can have blurry vision, drink a lot of water, and need to urinate frequently.

## How do you diagnose diabetes?

There are several different ways to diagnose diabetes. The most common way is the Hemoglobin A1C test. This test measures the average blood sugar level over the past 3 months. Normal values for A1C are 4-5.6%. The A1C test can be done at any time of the day – it does not matter if you are fasting or not.

## Why do I care about diabetes? Why is it important to treat?

The most common serious complication of diabetes is heart disease – this includes heart attack, stroke, and unfortunately, death. People with diabetes have double the risk (2X) of having heart disease than those without diabetes.

## What can I do?

Changing lifestyle habits (diet), increasing exercise, and losing weight is the key to battling diabetes. This is the best change to lower the risk of heart disease. Please see our Low T handout on diet and exercise.



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## What are the symptoms of low blood sugar?

You should NOT get low blood sugar with the diabetes medications we prescribe at Low T Center. However, it is important to be aware of symptoms of low blood sugar. This includes: sweating, trembling, feeling hungry, trouble walking, feeling weak, feeling dizzy, suddenly having difficulty seeing clearly, being confused or acting in a strange way, and passing out.

## What do I do if my blood sugar is low?

Drink 1/2 cup (4 ounces) or regular soda or regular juice. Make sure it is not sugar-free

OR

Eat 1 tablespoon of sugar

OR

Eat 4 saltine crackers

Eat 1 tablespoon of honey

OR

8 ounces of milk