

Health for the Whole Family
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LIVING WITH DIABETES

Ranked as our nation's sixth leading cause of death, diabetes afflicts approximately 23.6 million Americans, according to the American Diabetes Association. Often described as the silent killer, diabetes can, if left untreated, lead to kidney failure, gangrene and amputation, stroke and many other serious health problems. Although there are several forms of diabetes, Type I and Type II diabetes are the most common in the United States.

While many Americans are affected by diabetes, nearly a quarter of the people that have the disease are unaware that they have it. This is unfortunate since screenings are easy to perform and advances in medicine enable us to treat diabetes.

The most common form of diabetes in the United States is Type II diabetes, affecting between 90-95 percent of all people with diabetes. Essentially, Type II diabetes occurs as result of insulin resistance, a condition in which the body fails to make enough, or to properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that enables glucose to enter and fuel body cells.

This form of diabetes is associated with older age, obesity, family history of diabetes, previous history of gestational diabetes, physical inactivity, and ethnicity. About 80 percent of people with [Type II](#) diabetes are overweight.

The sooner your physician is able to screen for and diagnose the disease, the more damage that can be prevented. Often, people with Type II diabetes who practice healthy eating habits and do sufficient amounts of physical activity probably won't ever have to rely on insulin injections for survival.

While Type II diabetes accounts for the vast majority of all diabetes cases, Type I diabetes is the most common form of diabetes among children and young adults. Also known as insulin-dependent diabetes, it destroys the cells in the pancreas that are responsible for producing the hormone insulin.

While symptoms vary between individuals, common signs and symptoms of Type I diabetes include increased thirst and urination, constant hunger, weight loss, blurred vision, and extreme fatigue. If not diagnosed and treated with insulin, a person with type 1 diabetes can lapse into a life-threatening diabetic coma.

Insulin infusions are a necessity for Type I diabetics, as well as regular glucose tests which allow individuals to monitor their glucose levels. Regular glucose testing, a diet that is low in sugars and fat, and regular exercise is essential for Type I diabetics to lead healthy and productive lives.

The osteopathic approach, which focuses on treating the entire patient, not just the symptoms, can be of great value to those that are at risk for, or have been diagnosed with diabetes. If you're a diabetic, it's crucial that you visit your physician regularly to develop a diet and exercise regimen that's right for you.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) provide. Osteopathic physicians are fully licensed to prescribe medicine and practice in all specialty areas including surgery. D.O.s are trained to consider the health of the whole person and use their hands to help diagnose and treat their patients.