

Diabetes

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease where the body does not produce or use insulin properly. Insulin is needed to convert sugar, starches, and other foods into energy. When the body does not have adequate insulin, it is harder for glucose to get into cells. This causes the amount of glucose in the bloodstream to increase. This causes health problems.

Why should I care?

Having high blood glucose over time could mean you have diabetes. Diabetes is a serious medical condition that can lead problems with your heart, eyes, kidneys, nerves, gums, and teeth.

Am I at risk for diabetes?

Almost 21 million Americans have diabetes. Six million of these people are undiagnosed and unaware of their disease. Fifty-four million people have “pre-diabetes,” where their blood sugar is elevated but not high enough to be classified as diabetes.

People who are overweight, have a family member with diabetes, get little or no exercise, or are over the age of forty-five are at risk for developing diabetes.

Where do I stand?

Blood sugar/glucose levels will vary. The normal range before meals is between 80-110 mg/dL. After you eat, blood glucose levels increase. It is normal if your blood glucose is less than 180 mg/dL for at least one to two hours after you eat a meal.

Heartburn

More than 40 percent of Americans experience heartburn at least once every month, with 25 million American adults suffering from symptoms daily.

What causes heartburn?

Heartburn is caused by stomach acid flowing backward into the esophagus. Heartburn is caused by certain dietary habits such as eating large portions and eating right before bedtime. Drinking coffee, citrus juices, and caffeinated or alcoholic beverages and eating citrus fruits, garlic, raw onions, and fatty or spicy foods also cause heartburn symptoms.

Smoking, being overweight, stress, wearing restrictive clothing, and pregnancy are all reasons why patients experience heartburn.

What can I do about my heartburn?

Heartburn sufferers should identify their most common triggers and avoid these behaviors or substances to reduce the risk of heartburn.

Patients may also use medications to relieve symptoms. Antacids reduce existing stomach acid and provide short-term relief that lasts up to two hours. H2 blockers (such as famotidine or ranitidine) or acid reducers decrease acid release in the stomach and provide relief for six to twelve hours. Proton pump inhibitors (such as omeprazole) significantly inhibit acid production and can provide twenty-four-hour treatment with only one pill per day.



Quit Smoking

More than 400,000 people die each year in United States due to smoking. Smokers are at an increased risk of developing blindness, lung disease, blood clots, and cancer.

I want to quit. What should I do?

Whatever method you choose, you may benefit from some additional help. North Carolina sponsors a free hotline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) to help you quit smoking.

First, you have to really want to stop. Only eight percent of people can stop smoking and remain a non-smoker on their own. Success rates are much higher for people who seek support and use smoking cessation medications.

Smoking is a habit, so common approaches to quit smoking include **cognitive** (things you think about) and **behavioral** (things you can do to occupy yourself) changes.

Are there medications that can help me quit smoking?

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) contains nicotine and helps fight cravings you may have when quitting smoking. These products include: gums, lozenges, patches, nasal sprays (Rx), and inhalers (Rx). NRT is not a “crutch;” it is a valuable treatment that can help you quit if used correctly.

There are two prescription medications that may help you stop smoking. One medication reduces the symptoms of tobacco withdrawal by working in the brain, helps relieve stress, and helps you feel relaxed. The other, newer medication reduces symptoms of tobacco withdrawal by working on nicotine receptors in your body. There are some recent warnings that you may hear about concerning mood changes.

Immunizations

Every year, 20,000 Americans die from influenza. Many of these deaths could have been prevented by the flu vaccine.

Should I get a flu shot?

Flu shots are recommended for all people with chronic medical conditions (asthma, diabetes, anemia), for all pregnant women, and for everyone more than fifty years old. Flu shots can also be given to anyone more than six months old who wants to avoid getting the flu.

When should I get my flu shot?

The best time to get your flu shot is in October or November.

Can the flu shot give me the flu?

When given as a shot, the vaccine cannot cause the flu.

Where can I go to get a flu shot?

You can get your flu shot from your doctor’s office, at flu clinics in your area, or at some of your local pharmacies.

I do not like shots, is there another way to be vaccinated against the flu?

Healthy people ages two to forty-nine can get a nasal spray.

