

# Diabetes and sugar



**Over a million Australians and over 200,000 New Zealanders have diabetes, and this number is rapidly increasing. In fact, one person is diagnosed with diabetes every 5 minutes in Australia.**

Diabetes is where the body can't manage insulin which leads to raised glucose in the blood. All sugars and carbohydrate foods can increase your blood glucose. Diabetes associations recommend to only include small amounts of sugar in the diet.

## ***DID YOU KNOW?***

It is estimated that 58% of type 2 diabetes could be prevented.

## **Steps to reduce risk of type 2 diabetes:**

- **Make healthy food choices according to the Dietary Guidelines**
- **Maintain a healthy body weight**  
Research shows that if you are overweight, even reducing your weight by 5-10% more than halves your risk of developing diabetes
- **Regular physical activity**  
Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity daily  
Assists with weight management and helps normalise blood glucose levels
- **Manage blood pressure and cholesterol levels**
- **Don't smoke**

## **What is diabetes?**

The amount of glucose carried in your blood is strictly regulated. One of the hormones responsible for this is insulin, which is secreted by the pancreas and helps the body's cells take up glucose from the bloodstream. If you cannot produce enough insulin or use insulin properly, glucose builds up in the blood causing diabetes.

High blood glucose levels can damage your organs and blood vessels. If your diabetes is not successfully managed, it can lead to serious health problems, including heart disease, kidney failure, stroke, blindness and circulation problems.



## **Sugar as part of a healthy eating plan**

As table sugar (sucrose) was thought to produce a quicker spike in blood glucose levels after consumption than starchy foods like bread, people with diabetes were told not to eat it in case it made management of their blood glucose levels more difficult. However, a better understanding of how quickly sugar and starchy foods are digested and absorbed into the bloodstream – which is measured using the 'glycaemic index' (see next section) – has led to a change in this advice. Sugar is absorbed into the blood at a much slower rate than previously thought. Most people with diabetes can eat sugar in moderation as part of a healthy diet that includes carbohydrates with a low glycaemic index (GI). Sugar is therefore best eaten as part of a mixed meal or snack.

## **KNOW YOUR DIABETES – There are two types of diabetes:**

**Type 1 diabetes** is an 'autoimmune disease' – where the body's immune system destroys the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin so your body is not able to produce it. People with this type of diabetes control their blood glucose level by balancing carbohydrate intake with insulin injections.

**Type 2 diabetes** is largely a 'lifestyle disease' – where the body becomes resistant to insulin and it cannot maintain normal levels of blood glucose and/or gradually loses the capacity to produce enough insulin. Type 2 diabetes represents 90% of all cases of diabetes and is associated with modifiable lifestyle risk factors.

