

**15.7 million  
Americans have  
diabetes.**

**5.4 million  
of them don't  
know it.**

There's a growing problem in America. Each year nearly 800,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with diabetes. But millions more still have no idea they have it.

What's the big deal? Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.

It has many complications, including heart attack and stroke, blindness, and kidney disease.

*(\* Above statistics are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)*

## **What is a doctor of internal medicine?**

Doctors of internal medicine (also known as "internists" or "general internists") specialize in treating adults. We don't deliver babies or treat children, and we don't do surgery. An internist can be your primary care doctor, just like a general practitioner or family practice doctor.

Internists have undergone special study and training focusing on adult diseases and prevention. At least three of our seven or more years of medical training are dedicated to learning how to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases primarily affecting adults.

More information  
on diabetes can be  
found online at  
[www.doctorsforadults.com](http://www.doctorsforadults.com)

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# **Diabetes**

America's  
Hidden Killer



INTERNAL MEDICINE  
DOCTORS FOR ADULTS®

# What is Diabetes?

**P**eople with diabetes have difficulty changing food into energy. Your body converts food into a sugar called glucose, which is carried by your blood to cells in your body. The cells need a chemical called insulin to help them process the glucose into energy.

When a person has diabetes their body may not produce enough insulin or their cells may not

be able to use the insulin to convert the glucose into energy. So, the glucose builds up in the blood, where the cells can't use it.



“Type 2” diabetes is the most common form of diabetes, accounting for 90-95 percent of all cases.

Other types of diabetes include “type 1,” which occurs in children and young adults, and “gestational diabetes,” which can occur during pregnancy.

# Risk Factors

**C**ertain factors may put you at greater risk to get type 2 diabetes. You may be at risk if you:

- Are over age 45
- Have a family history of diabetes
- Are overweight
- Do not exercise regularly
- Have had gestational diabetes
- Have high blood pressure or high cholesterol
- Are African American, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic, or Pacific Islander



# Warning Signs

**D**iabetes symptoms may be mild or even nonexistent, but be sure to let your internist know if you experience:

- Extreme thirst and/or hunger
- Fatigue
- Frequent need to urinate
- Unusual weight loss
- Blurred vision
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Frequent infections
- Bruises that are slow to heal

# Get Tested!

**I**f you have risk factors or symptoms, your internist can prescribe a simple blood test to diagnose diabetes. You may need to take the test twice to confirm the results.

# Prevention & Treatment

**Y**ou can lower your risk of getting type 2 diabetes by taking a few steps. Eat a healthy diet high in fruits, vegetables, fish, poultry and whole grains. Exercise regularly. Lose weight if you are overweight.

Diabetes has no cure, but can be managed. Diet control and exercise are important, and home monitoring of blood glucose may be required. Pills or insulin injections may also be prescribed to help lower the blood glucose level.

Nearly 75 percent of people with diabetes also have high blood pressure, which can lead to many complications, including death. Blood pressure can usually be controlled with lifestyle modifications and prescription drugs.