What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic (long-term) disease marked by high levels of sugar in the blood. It occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin (a hormone released by the pancreas) or respond well enough to insulin. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes. There are approximately 1 million people with type 2 diabetes currently. This figure is expected to increase significantly in the coming years.

People with diabetes have a higher risk of developing heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, circulation problems, lower limb amputations, nerve damage and damage to the kidneys and eyes.

Risk factors

Many Australians, particularly those over 40, are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes through lifestyle factors such as physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Family history of diabetes and genetics also play a role in type 2 diabetes.

What can you do to lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes?

Your lifestyle choices can prevent, or at least, delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.

You cannot change risk factors like age and your genetic background. You can do something about being overweight, your waist measurement, how active you are, eating habits, or smoking.

If there is type 2 diabetes in your family, you should be careful not to put on weight. Reducing your waist measurement reduces your risk of type 2 diabetes.

By increasing your physical activity and improving your eating habits you can lower your risk. Eat plenty of vegetables and high fibre cereal products every day and use a small amount of fats and oils. Monounsaturated oils, such as olive or canola oil, are the best choice.

You can have type 2 diabetes and not know it because there may be no obvious symptoms.
1. Your age group
   - Under 35 years: 0 points
   - 35 – 44 years: 2 points
   - 45 – 54 years: 4 points
   - 55 – 64 years: 6 points
   - 65 years or over: 8 points

2. Your gender
   - Female: 0 points
   - Male: 3 points

3. Your ethnicity/country of birth:
   3a. Are you of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Pacific Islander or Maori descent?
      - No: 0 points
      - Yes: 2 points
   3b. Where were you born?
      - Australia, Asia (including the Indian sub-continent): 0 points
      - Middle East, North Africa, Southern Europe: 2 points
      - Other: 0 points

4. Have either of your parents, or any of your brothers or sisters been diagnosed with diabetes (type 1 or type 2)?
   - No: 0 points
   - Yes: 3 points

5. Have you ever been found to have high blood glucose (sugar) (for example, in a health examination, during an illness, during pregnancy)?
   - No: 0 points
   - Yes: 6 points

6. Are you currently taking medication for high blood pressure?
   - No: 0 points
   - Yes: 2 points

7. Do you currently smoke cigarettes or any other tobacco products on a daily basis?
   - No: 0 points
   - Yes: 2 points

8. How often do you eat vegetables or fruit?
   - Everyday: 0 points
   - Not everyday: 1 point

9. On average, would you say you do at least 2.5 hours of physical activity per week (for example, 30 minutes a day on 5 or more days a week)?
   - Yes: 0 points
   - No: 2 points

10. Your waist measurement taken below the ribs (usually at the level of the navel, and while standing)

The Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool (AUSDRISK)

The overall score may overestimate the risk of diabetes in those aged less than 25 years. The Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool was developed by the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute on behalf of the Australian, State and Territory Governments as part of the COAG initiative to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Add up your points

Your risk of developing type 2 diabetes within 5 years*:
   - 5 or less: Low risk
     - Approximately one person in every 100 will develop diabetes.
   - 6-11: Intermediate risk
     - For scores of 6-8, approximately one person in every 50 will develop diabetes. For scores of 9-11, approximately one person in every 30 will develop diabetes.
   - 12 or more: High risk
     - For scores of 12-15, approximately one person in every 14 will develop diabetes. For scores of 16-19, approximately one person in every 7 will develop diabetes. For scores of 20 and above, approximately one person in every three will develop diabetes.

If you scored 6-11 points in the AUSDRISK you may be at increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Discuss your score and your individual risk with your doctor. Improving your lifestyle may help reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

If you scored 12 points or more in the AUSDRISK you may have undiagnosed type 2 diabetes or be at high risk of developing the disease. See your doctor about having a fasting blood glucose test. Act now to prevent type 2 diabetes.