

Diabetes: Is it an epidemic?

In 2006, *The New York Times* published a series of articles on diabetes, spotlighting the alarming increase in this disease. The articles talked about “a virtual epidemic of type 2 diabetes.”

Here’s what they reported.

The number of people with diabetes has shot up 14 percent since 2003. Nearly 21 million Americans have diabetes. The breakdown by age group shows that of Americans who have diabetes, 2 percent are ages 20 to 39 and 40 percent are 65 or older. However, the number of children with type 2 diabetes is increasing rapidly.

About 5 million Americans have diabetes but don’t know it. It can take years before these people become aware they have the disease. Often, they first learn they have diabetes when they develop a major complication, such as kidney disease, heart attack or stroke. Then there are the 41 million people who have the prediabetic condition of high blood sugar and are at high risk for developing the disease in the near future.

What can you do about it?

A lot.

Of the five major risk factors, two — lack of exercise and excessive weight — are within your control.

- **Obesity.** Most people with type 2 diabetes weigh at least 20 percent more than what is recommended for their height.
- **Sedentary lifestyle.** Blood sugar levels rise in people who don’t get enough exercise.
- **Heredity.** Type 2 diabetes tends to run in families.
- **Age.** The risk for developing type 2 diabetes increases with age.
- **Race.** Type 2 diabetes is more common among American Indians, African-Americans and Hispanics.

Type 2 diabetes does not have a cure, but the disease can be managed. Through management, you can lower the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Diabetes is an everyday job. You need to watch blood glucose levels, eat right, exercise and quit smoking (if you smoke).

Tips to keep your feet feeling fit

People with diabetes often have trouble with their feet. That’s because high blood sugar levels can damage blood vessels and nerves over time. Damage to the nerves means you may lose feeling in your feet (diabetic neuropathy) making it hard for you to tell if you have a blister or sore that needs attention.

Here’s how to keep on top of your feet:

- Wash your feet daily with lukewarm water and soap and dry well, especially between the toes.
- Keep your skin smooth by applying cream or lanolin, especially on the heels. If the skin is cracked, let your doctor know.
- Keep feet dry by dusting with nonmedicated powder.
- Don’t let feet get too hot or too cold.
- Don’t go barefoot.
- Check your feet every day. Talk to your doctor about treating calluses, corns or bunions. Call your doctor at the very first sign of redness, swelling, pain that doesn’t go away or numbness.

Recipe

Simple Baked Fish with Lime and Cilantro

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- Olive oil spray
- 4 fish fillets (5 ounces to 6 ounces each of tilapia, mackerel, lake trout, tuna or salmon)
- ½ cup prepared salsa

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. In a small bowl, combine olive oil, lime juice and cilantro and set aside.
3. Spray baking sheet with olive oil spray and place fish skin side down in a single layer over bottom.
4. Brush filet with the olive oil and lime juice mixture.
5. Cover and refrigerate for 20 minutes.
6. Bake uncovered about 15 minutes or until just cooked.
7. Top each portion with two tablespoons salsa.

Makes 4 servings

Nutritional information

Calories	204
Fat	6.5 g
Protein	34 g
Carbohydrates	2 g
Fiber	0 g
Sodium	720 mg

Did you know...

Diabetes defined

- **Glucose** is a simple sugar. It's called blood sugar as it circulates through the blood in the body.
- **Type 1 diabetes** results when the body does not produce insulin, a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into the energy needed for daily life.
- **Type 2 diabetes** results when the pancreas produces too little insulin to control glucose, or sugar, in the blood.
- **Diabetic retinopathy** describes damage to the blood vessels in the retina of the eye that could lead to blindness.
- **Carbohydrates** are mainly sugars and starches that the body breaks down into glucose. They are a source of energy for the body.

Resources

BCN diabetes program

BCN's diabetes program helps you better understand diabetes, how it affects your life and how you can better manage your condition.

For more information on the program, call the Disease Management department at 800-392-4247. TTY users can call 800-257-9980. Registered nurses are available from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday (except holidays).

Also, check out our Web site: MiBCN.com/diabetes.

Diagnostic information

Common symptoms of diabetes include:

- Feeling tired
- Increased thirst
- Increased urination
- Blurred vision
- Hunger
- Infections or cuts that don't heal
- Weight loss

But don't wait for signs. You're at risk if you:

- Are too heavy
- Have a family history of diabetes
- Are over age 45
- Have high blood pressure