

Diabetes — National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

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The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), our nation's special education law, defines 14 [categories of disabilities](#) under which a child may be found eligible for special education and related services. One of those categories is "[Other Health Impairment](#)," or OHI, for short. Within OHI's definition, numerous disabilities and medical conditions are explicitly named. **Diabetes** is one such.

This short resource page accompanies NICHCY's fact sheet on [Other Health Impairment](#) and provides a brief overview of diabetes and connections to sources of additional information.

A Brief Look at Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or use insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone our bodies use to convert sugar, starches, and other food into the energy we need. While the cause of diabetes is unknown, it appears that both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise play roles. There are 23.6 million children and adults in the United States with diabetes. This is about 7.8% of the population.

There are several types of diabetes.

- **Type 1 diabetes.**

When a person's body produces too little insulin (or no insulin), Type 1 diabetes results. It can develop at any age, but most typically appears during childhood or adolescence. That is one reason why Type 1 diabetes used to be known as "juvenile diabetes" or "insulin-dependent" diabetes.

- **Type 2 diabetes.**

The most common type of diabetes, Type 2 develops because a person is insulin-resistant, meaning that the body is not using insulin properly at the same time it is producing relatively low amounts of insulin.

- **Gestational diabetes.**

As the name implies, gestational diabetes develops during pregnancy and can lead to very high (and dangerous) blood sugar levels. The condition can be treated and typically disappears after the woman delivers.

- **Pre-diabetes.**

This condition occurs when a person's blood sugar levels are above normal but not high enough to be categorized as Type 2 diabetes. Pre-diabetes increases a person's risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. There are 57 million Americans with pre-diabetes.

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Symptoms of Diabetes

Some diabetes symptoms are:

- Going to the bathroom frequently (to urinate)
- Lots of thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Weight loss



- More fatigue
- Irritability
- Blurry vision

If your child has these symptoms, it's a very good idea to see the doctor immediately and investigate the possibility of diabetes. The condition is fairly easy to diagnose via two most commonly used tests:

- FPG test: Stands for "Fasting Plasma Glucose" test and requires the person to fast (not eat) for at least eight hours. Blood is then drawn and its blood sugar levels are analyzed.
- OGTT test: Here, a person (1) fasts for at least eight hours, and (2) then drinks a beverage with a high level of sugar. Two hours are allowed to pass, and then blood is drawn and analyzed for its sugar levels.

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Resources of More Information on Diabetes

American Diabetes Association (ADA)

(800) 342-2383

<http://www.diabetes.org>

National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse

(800) 860-8747

www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International (JDRF)

(800) 533-CURE (2873)

<http://www.jdrf.org>

Información en español

<http://www.diabetes.org/espanol/default.jsp>

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