



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
Ministry of Health

Diabetes Diseases

**Important Information
you need to know about diabetes.**

Introduction

Diabetes Mellitus is an abnormally high blood glucose (sugar) level caused by the inability of the body to either produce or respond to insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone that carries glucose from the blood stream into the body cells where it is used for energy. If there is too little insulin, blood glucose level continues to rise because the glucose is not removed from the blood stream.

What causes Diabetes?

Diabetes is caused by lack of, reduced amount or resistance to insulin. This results into life-long (chronic) disorder of glucose, fat and protein use by the body.

Types of diabetes

There are four known types of diabetes i.e. Type 1, Type2, gestational and nutritional.

- 1) Type 1 diabetes is also known as insulin dependant diabetes and it accounts for about 10% of all diabetic cases in Uganda. It generally occurs in children but is usually diagnosed before the age of 40 years. These individuals do not produce enough insulin and therefore they need life-long treatment with insulin. Type 1 diabetes is more difficult to control than the other types.

- 2) Type 2 diabetes is also called non-insulin dependant. This type of diabetes is very common among adults and is often associated with obesity. Eighty percent (80%) of all the people suffering from the type 2 diabetes are either over weight or obese. Type 2 diabetes can be controlled by a healthier diet and exercise.

- 3) Gestational diabetes usually occurs during pregnancy and disappears after child birth. It develops as a result of hormones released during pregnancy that increase the body's resistance to insulin. Women who have had this form of diabetes also face a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

- 4) Nutritional diabetes is common among poor people who eat a lot of cassava without any protein.

How do you tell that one has diabetes? (Signs and symptoms)

A person who has diabetes usually experiences the following:

- Always feels thirsty and his/her mouth feels dry
- Feels hungry all the time
- Urinates more frequently than normal including at night
- Begins to lose weight

- May not see clearly
- Feels frequent itching around the private parts
- Always feels tired
- Has frequent skin infections

How can you be sure that it is diabetes? (Diagnosis)

Diabetes can only be confirmed in a health unit by a qualified health worker. A simple dip-stick test can detect glucose in a sample of urine. If you have glucose in your urine it is likely that you have diabetes. However, some people have kidneys that are weak and glucose may leak into urine with normal blood glucose level. Therefore, if your urine contains any glucose you should have a blood test to check for diabetes. This can confirm or rule out the disease. It should be remembered that the normal blood glucose level is 4-6 mmol/dl.

What are the possible dangers of diabetes?

Those with uncontrolled diabetes can experience complications as the disease progresses. The dangers are categorised into two: Short and long term.

Short term

Diabetic people may be more susceptible to infections and in severe cases it can cause dehydration, drowsiness and coma.

Long term

The following problems could arise

- a. Damage to blood vessels which may lead to poor blood circulation, heart attack and stroke
- b. Damage to the kidneys
- c. Gradual damage of the nerves
- d. Eye problems which can affect the vision
- e. Foot problems due to poor blood circulation and nerve damage like ulcers, infections and gangrene leading to amputation
- f. Impotence

What are the factors that may put you at the risk of getting diabetes?

The following factors may lead a person to getting diabetes:

- Borne in a family with history of diabetes and therefore stand the risk of developing the disease

- Eating unhealthy diets high in fat, low in fibre and with little or no starchy foods, fruit or vegetables
- Being over weight and obesity
- Lack of or Limited physical activities
- Cigarette smoking
- Heart diseases
- Aging





Common conditions in diabetic patients

A person with diabetes may experience either too low or too high blood glucose level. This can cause problems to the patient.

High blood glucose level (hyperglycaemia)

This is caused by eating too much of the wrong foods (fatty foods, low vegetable and low fruit intake), feeling stressed, being anxious or emotional, not taking any or sufficient insulin, not taking medications appropriately and skipping exercises. A person may experience thirst, frequent urination, tiredness and weakness, blurred vision (difficulty in seeing) and even coma

Low blood glucose level (hypoglycaemia)

This is caused by eating too little food like; carbohydrates, delaying and skipping meals or snacks, exercising harder or longer than usual (over one hour), taking too much insulin or medication, being ill or drinking alcohol on an empty stomach.

A person with low blood glucose level usually experiences, paleness, sweating, feels like vomiting, headache, difficulty in seeing, unusual rudeness or laughter, bad temper, and confusion that may progress to aggression, fainting, convulsion, or even death.

Can diabetes be cured?

Diabetes is a chronic disease which has no cure. However with careful and committed monitoring, people with the disease can avoid complications and enjoy good quality life.

Prevention of diabetes

Diabetes can be prevented through

- Weight monitoring and control
- Regular blood pressure measurement



Health worker taking blood pressure

- Avoiding cigarette smoking
- Regular exercises:



- Controlling blood cholesterol level through eating healthy foods like vegetables, fruits, low fat diet, plenty of starchy foods
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption



Key messages on Control of Diabetes:

1. Eat higher fibre-carbohydrate foods. (whole wheat bread, millet, sorghum)
2. Eat more of the green leafy vegetables
3. Minimise eating refined sugars, sugary foods, fats and salt.

4. If you drink alcohol do so in moderation (small quantities)
5. Monitor your weight regularly to establish the risk of getting diabetes.



A person taking a weight measurement

6. Eat small and regular meals-do not miss any meals
7. Do regular exercises i.e. 30-60 minutes at least 5 times a week.
8. Take 6-8 glasses (tumpeco)of water per day
9. Reduce eating of processed foods such as tinned and packaged foods, salty meats, potato or cassava chips and salted nuts

