

Facts

Type 1 Diabetes Facts

Affects Young Children

Type 1 diabetes strikes children suddenly, makes them dependent on injected or pumped insulin for life, and carries the constant threat of devastating complications. While diagnosis most often occurs in childhood and adolescence, it can and does strike adults as well. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas. While the causes of this process are not yet entirely understood, scientists believe that both genetic factors and environmental triggers are involved.

Needs Constant Attention

To stay alive, people with type 1 diabetes must take multiple insulin injections daily or continually infuse insulin through a pump. They must also test their blood sugar by pricking their fingers for blood six or more times per day. While trying to balance insulin doses with their food intake and daily activities, people with this form of diabetes must always be prepared for serious hypoglycemic (low blood sugar) and hyperglycemic (high blood sugar) reactions, both of which can be life-limiting and life threatening.

Insulin Does Not Cure It

While insulin allows a person to stay alive, it does not cure diabetes nor does it prevent its eventual and devastating effects, which may include: kidney failure, blindness, nerve damage, amputations, heart attack, stroke, and pregnancy complications.

Difficult to Manage

Despite rigorous attention to maintaining a meal plan and exercise regimen, and always injecting the proper amount of insulin, many other factors can adversely affect efforts to tightly control blood-sugar levels including: stress, hormonal changes, periods of growth, physical activity, medications, illness/infection, and fatigue.

Statistics and Warning Signs

- As many as 3 million Americans may have type 1 diabetes.†
- Each year more than 15,000 children are diagnosed with diabetes in the U.S. That's 40 children per day.
- Warning signs of type 1 diabetes include: extreme thirst, frequent urination, drowsiness or lethargy, increased appetite, sudden weight loss for no reason, sudden vision changes, sugar in urine, fruity odor on breath, heavy or labored breathing, stupor or unconsciousness. These may occur suddenly.

What is it like to have type 1 diabetes?

Ask people who have type 1 diabetes. It's difficult. It's upsetting. It's life threatening. It doesn't go away.

"Both children and adults like me who live with type 1 diabetes need to be mathematicians, physicians, personal trainers and dieticians all rolled into one. We need to be constantly factoring and adjusting, making frequent finger sticks to check blood sugars, and giving ourselves multiple daily insulin injections just to stay alive."

— JDRF International Chairman, Mary Tyler Moore

"This disease controls our lives with all the pricking of the fingers, shots, high and low blood sugars; it's like being on a seesaw. Without a cure, we will be stuck on this seesaw till the day we die."

— Tre Kawkins, 12, Michigan

"I want to live someday without thinking about my diabetes. It's a lot for a little kid to keep up with."

— Luke Varadi, 11, South Carolina

"Diabetes has made me different than all my friends. I have an extra burden to carry."

— Caroline McEnery, 17, Connecticut

† Type 1 Diabetes, 2004; KRC Research for JDRF, Jan. 2005