

Diabetes Myths and Facts

If you cross your eyes they'll stay that way. Gum stays in your stomach for seven years. Don't swim an hour after eating. Myths abound about a variety of health issues, including diabetes. You got diabetes because you ate too much sugar. You will never be able to eat sweets again. You have to give up your favorite foods if you have diabetes.

If you are diagnosed with diabetes you may have heard some of these misconceptions. So here are some facts about diabetes to help you successfully manage your condition and live a healthy, active life.

Myth: Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.

Fact: No, it does not. Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas cannot make insulin; type 2 diabetes is caused by the body's inability to make enough insulin, insulin does not work properly or both.

Myth: You will never be able to eat sweets again.

Fact: You will be able to eat a certain amount of sweets as part of a healthy meal plan.

Myth: You have to give up your favorite foods.

Fact: No foods are "off limits." However, people with diabetes should eat a balanced diet that is low in fat, with meals that focus on whole grain foods, vegetables and fruit.

Myth: Diabetes is contagious.

Fact: Diabetes is not spread like a cold or the flu, but a genetic link and lifestyle factors can play a part in the development of the disease.

Myth: People with diabetes are more likely to get colds or other illnesses.

Fact: Diabetics are no more likely to get sick, but having diabetes can make an illness more difficult to control. People with diabetes also have a higher risk of developing complications.

Myth: Diabetes is not a serious disease.

Fact: Yes it is. Diabetes causes more deaths annually than breast cancer and AIDS combined; two-thirds of diabetics die of heart disease or stroke.

Myth: Children can outgrow diabetes.

Fact: Diabetes can be effectively managed, but it cannot be outgrown. Children with type 2 diabetes may experience improved blood sugar levels following puberty or with lifestyle changes, but they will always be predisposed toward elevated blood sugar levels.

Myth: Having diabetes means you have to take insulin.

Fact: People with type 1 diabetes require insulin; people with type 2 diabetes may or may not need to take insulin.

Myth: Diabetes can be cured by taking insulin.

Fact: There is no cure for diabetes. Insulin helps manage diabetes but it does not rectify the underlying cause of the disease.

Myth: You can't exercise if you have diabetes.

Fact: Yes you can. Exercise helps manage your weight, improve heart health, relieve stress, and aid in blood sugar control.

Knowing the facts about diabetes can help you make smart food choices and wise lifestyle decisions so you can stay healthy. And don't worry -- crossing your eyes won't be permanent, gum passes through your digestive system in a matter of days, and it's okay to swim right after eating. For more information about diabetes, talk with your doctor or visit the American Diabetes Association website at www.diabetes.org.