

# DIABETES EDUCATION:

## TYPE 1 DIABETES FAQs

### WHAT IS TYPE 1 DIABETES?

---

Type 1 Diabetes is an **autoimmune disease**. An autoimmune disease is when the body's natural defense system—or immune system—can't tell the difference between its own cells and foreign cells. When this happens, the immune system **mistakenly attacks** its own cells, thinking it is protecting them from something. In the case of **Type 1 Diabetes**, the cells in the pancreas (the organ that produces insulin) are attacked. This attack prevents the pancreas from making enough insulin for your body.

Insulin is important because it is the hormone in your body that is in charge of **how sugar is absorbed into your cells**. In order to work normally, all the cells in your body need sugar. If there is not enough insulin to help the sugar get into your cells, **sugar builds up in the blood** instead. That is what happens to people with Type 1 Diabetes.

There is another type of diabetes called Type 2 Diabetes. People with Type 2 Diabetes sometimes have bodies that don't make enough insulin, too. But more often than not, the problem is that their bodies have insulin, but their cells do not respond to it.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TYPE 1 DIABETES?

---

Type 1 Diabetes symptoms include the following: **intense** thirst, being **very** tired, urinating **often**, losing **weight**, and **blurred** vision. In **extreme cases**, Type 1 Diabetes can also cause nausea or vomiting, belly pain, and panting.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE TYPE 1 DIABETES?

---

Your doctor or nurse can do a **blood test** to measure how much sugar is in your blood. The test will show whether you have diabetes. If you do, your doctor or nurse can then figure out whether it is

Type 1 or Type 2 based on your age, your weight, and other factors.

### HOW IS TYPE 1 DIABETES TREATED?

---

Treatment for type 1 diabetes involves the following:

**Blood sugar measurement:** You have to measure your blood sugar often to make sure it doesn't get too high or too low. (Your doctor or nurse will explain how to measure your blood sugar, and how often to do it.)

**Insulin:** You have to use insulin shots or an insulin pump to help keep your blood sugar levels in the right range. (An insulin pump is a device that you wear close to your body. It is connected to a tube that goes under your skin and supplies insulin.)

**Meal and activity planning:** Another important part of managing type 1 diabetes is carefully planning meals and activities. Eating raises blood sugar, and being active lowers it, so balancing the two is helpful. Even with the planning that needs to happen, people with type 1 diabetes can eat normal food, be active, and do all the things that most other people do.

**Taking care of your health:** There are other steps you can take to stay healthy, such as not smoking. It's also important to get the flu vaccine every year. People with diabetes need vaccinations to prevent pneumonia and hepatitis B as well.

### WHAT IF I WANT TO GET PREGNANT?

---

Many people with Type 1 Diabetes have **healthy pregnancies**. If you want to have a baby, make sure you work with your doctor to control your blood sugar really well before, during, and after your pregnancy. This will help **protect you** and **your baby** from problems.