# Your Annual Diabetes Wake-Up Call Is Here! [VIDEO]

Type 2 diabetes is more common among Black Americans and Latinos. Diabetes Alert Day highlights the seriousness and risks.

March 22, 2022 By Trent Straube

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Did you know that about 37.3 million Americans—over 11% of the population—are living with diabetes and that one in five of these people don't know they have the disease? People with overweight or obesity or who are not physically active have a higher chance of developing diabetes. Untreated, it can lead to severe health challenges, including eye problems, digestive issues and nerve disorders that require amputations.

That may sound severe or alarmist, but those are the facts. And today, March 22, is annual Diabetes Alert Day. The awareness day is observed the fourth Tuesday of every March.

What's more, "approximately 96 million people ages 18 or older have prediabetes, a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes," according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), which is part of the National Institutes of Health. "More than 8 in 10 adults living with prediabetes don't know they have it."

As the Real Health Basics section on diabetes explains, type 2 diabetes is more common among Black Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and some Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.

More than 1 in 3 American adults have prediabetes, and more than 80% don't know they have it. On Diabetes Alert Day, CDC encourages you to learn your risk for prediabetes today by taking this quick 1-minute quiz.

https://t.co/Bc8dRCIGap#TipsForDiabetes pic.twitter.com/QQ62ntwn15

— CDC (@CDCgov) March 22, 2022

To better assess your risk for diabetes, you can take a simple and free online type 2 diabetes risk test on the NIDDK website as well as via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's site.

You can also check out the NIDDK video at the top of this article (and on YouTube), to watch experts explain how to manage the disease, reduce complications and best prevent it.

TODAY IS DIABETES ALERT DAY! 1 in 10 Americans have diabetes, and 1 in 5 with diabetes do not know they have it. Learn about new therapies to slow DKD and watch ASN President Susan Quaggin speak about great new research on DKD! https://t.co/2aUh4tHO3K; https://t.co/bZBuFtcq1S pic.twitter.com/OLqGsByll2

— American Association of Kidney Patients (@KidneyPatients) March 22, 2022

But let's back up: What, exactly, is diabetes? Real Health's Diabetes 101 offers a primer:

> Diabetes is a disease that results when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or the cells are unable to use it. Insulin is a hormone made by cells in the pancreas that cells use to process glucose (a form of sugar) for energy. When this happens, the body is unable to properly use and store glucose, resulting in the elevated blood sugar levels.
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> Excess glucose in the blood can lead to severe health problems, or even death, if left untreated. For example, high blood sugar can damage the vessels that supply blood to our vital organs. In turn, this raises the risk of stroke, heart and kidney disease, eye problems and nerve disorders. Serious diabetes-related nerve disorders can affect the feet and lead to

amputation of the lower limbs. What's more, complications from diabetes can also result in nerve disorders that may cause digestive problems and erectile dysfunction.

There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes. In type 1 diabetes, the body doesn't make insulin due to destruction of insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. It typically arises during childhood.

Type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease, usually arises later in life. While the body still produces some insulin, cells are unable to use it for energy, a condition known as insulin resistance.

Gestational diabetes affects women during pregnancy, usually around their 24th week.

The main risk factor for type 1 diabetes is having family members who have the disease. According to the American Diabetes Association, anyone whose mother, father, sister or brother had type 1 diabetes should get screened for the disease. In addition, you're at risk for type 1 diabetes if you have a history of injury or disease involving the pancreas. Type 1 diabetes may develop after a bacterial or viral infection.

The most common risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes include having overweight or obesity and being older than age 45 as well as having high blood pressure, a sedentary lifestyle, polycystic ovary syndrome, a history of diabetes during pregnancy or family members who have the disease.

See Real Health's Diabetes 101 for more details, including common symptoms and information about testing and treatment. And click the hashtag #Diabetes for related coverage.

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