

Diabetes: Incidence Increases in Young People

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According to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, an estimated one million Americans are being treated for Type 1 diabetes, and approximately 29,000 new cases are diagnosed annually in the United States.

Diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, the gland that produces insulin. Insulin is required to absorb sugar from the blood into the body's cells—without it, sugar levels in the blood become very high and can cause serious health problems.

There are two types of diabetes: Type 1 diabetes and Type 2 diabetes. Type 1, also referred to as insulin-dependent or juvenile diabetes, occurs when the pancreas stops producing sufficient insulin. Juvenile diabetes usually occurs before the age of 20. Type 2, or adult-onset diabetes, occurs when the body becomes less sensitive to the effects of insulin.

Type 1 diabetes is thought to be an autoimmune disease, which means the immune system malfunctions to cause destruction of the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. This is the most common type of diabetes in children and requires treatment by insulin injections.

Diabetes is thought to be due to genetic and environmental factors, not all of which have been identified. Michael Tansey, MD, assistant professor in the University of Iowa Department of Pediatrics, explained that Type 2 diabetes seems to have more of a genetic correlation.

"Type 2 diabetes seems to be more strongly inherited than Type 1 diabetes," Tansey said. "However, Type 1, or child-onset diabetes, has certain genetic predispositions, and it is important that parents know the symptoms of the disease." Both types of diabetes may occur in children without any family history of diabetes, Tansey added.

Common symptoms of juvenile diabetes include: frequent urination, white spots (glucose-filled urine) on underwear, frequent bladder infections, constant thirst, fatigue, sudden weight loss, tingling in hands and feet, skin infections, nausea, and vomiting.

Treatment for juvenile diabetes includes daily injections of insulin, as well as a diet low in fat, regular exercise and careful monitoring of blood glucose levels. Tansey pointed out that children with diabetes can lead normal, healthy lives if their diabetes is managed properly.

Although children with diabetes normally are diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, Tansey noted that there has been an increase in the number of Type 2 diabetes cases reported in children in the past 10 years.

"We have seen an increase in Type 2 diabetes in children in the past 10 years, partly because of the increase in obese children," Tansey said. "If there is a history of diabetes in the family, it is important that parents encourage their children to eat healthy and get lots of activity."

Source:

<http://www.uihealthcare.com/topics/medicaldepartments/pediatrics/diabetes/index.html>