



# MedStar Health

## Understanding, preventing, and treating **diabetes**

Commonly-asked questions, and the answers you should know



The MedStar Health Mobile Health Center was created to help people in the community address medical issues and concerns. We provide quality, reliable, convenient, community-based care, while giving people useful information and tools to improve their overall health and wellness.

Here, we provide answers to a few commonly asked questions about diabetes – from what it is and who is at highest risk, to how to treat it - with input from our medical director, Andrea Gaspar, MD.

**The MedStar Health Mobile Health Center visits communities across Baltimore each week to make it easier to access the medical care you need, in a location that is convenient for you.**

**Learn more about our services online at [MedStarHealth.org/MobileHealthCenter](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/MobileHealthCenter).**

**Walk-ins are welcome but appointments are recommended and can be scheduled at 410-350-7511.**

### **What is diabetes?**

Diabetes is a condition that causes high blood sugar. This happens because the body has trouble converting blood sugar into energy, due to a problem with insulin - the hormone that your body uses to process sugar. When your blood sugar is high, it can cause many other serious health issues.

### **Type 1 vs. Type 2 diabetes: what's the difference?**

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that is typically diagnosed in younger people. "Autoimmune" means the body attacks itself. In Type 1 diabetes, the body attacks the pancreas, the organ that makes insulin. Type 2 diabetes typically develops over time as a result of too much sugar in the blood, making it hard for your body to respond as well to insulin.

### **Who is at highest risk for diabetes?**

People with a family history of diabetes are much more likely to get diabetes. Knowing your family history and sharing it with your doctor is very important. Other things that can increase your risk include being overweight, heavy alcohol use, not exercising regularly, eating foods with lots of sugar, and having a history of diabetes in pregnancy.

### **Can diabetes cause or lead to other health issues?**

Diabetic patients are at increased risk for heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, nerve pain, skin infections, poor eyesight, and arterial disease. This is because diabetes causes inflammation in the blood vessels, resulting in poor blood flow and organ damage. This is why it is important to get checked for diabetes and - if you have it - make sure it is controlled. Your primary care provider can help.

### **How is diabetes treated?**

Type 1 diabetes is always treated with insulin. Type 2 diabetes can often be treated with oral medications, plus a healthier diet and exercise. In some cases, diet and exercise can completely control diabetes. You can turn to the Mobile Health Center team for diabetes education, screening, and treatment. We can also refer you to an endocrinologist, if needed.