

Disability Campaign.org

Preventing Type 2 Diabetes in Children



Photo: BBFamilyHealth.org

The American Diabetes Association defines diabetes as “a problem with your body that causes blood glucose (sugar) levels to rise higher than normal.” In type 2 diabetes, a person’s body does not use insulin properly. To make up for it, the pancreas makes extra insulin will, but over time the pancreas is not able to continue making enough insulin to keep your blood glucose at normal levels. It is a common condition that is on the rise. According to the American Diabetes Association, by the year 2050, one in three people will have diabetes.

Years ago, type 2 diabetes was a disease that primarily affected adults; children are now being diagnosed as well. The CDC reports that more than 186,000 people younger than age 20 have diabetes. But type II diabetes is mostly preventable and there are ways that you can help protect your children from developing this condition.

The digestive system breaks down carbohydrates into blood sugar glucose; then, the pancreas creates a hormone called insulin that transports glucose into cells so that it can be used for energy. If the body is unable to handle all the glucose in the blood vessels, this leads to diabetes complications, such as heart disease, blindness, or kidney failure.

Risk factors for Type 2 Diabetes in Children

- Family history of diabetes
- Female Gender
- American Indians, African-Americans, Asians, or Hispanic/Latino
- Insulin Resistance
- **Being overweight**

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Obesity or excess weight is the number one risk factor for type 2 diabetes in children.

Any step you take in the prevention process will be focused around your children maintaining a healthy weight and eating a healthy, balanced diet. Even small changes can make a big difference. Remember to not just focus on one child; get the whole family involved. Not only will you be setting an example for your children as the adult, but you will also be taking care of the health of you and your entire family.

1. **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** If fresh produce is not available, try frozen or canned fruits (in natural juice) and vegetables. You can also try dried fruits or snacks like baked apple chips. Keep fruits and vegetables peeled and cut up in Mason jars in the refrigerator or containers and package them in your kids' lunch boxes.
2. **Drink water instead of soda or juices.**
Not only are many sodas, juices, and sport drinks sugar-sweetened, but these drinks also add extra calories with little or no nutritional value. If you must have something different to drink, consider having a smoothie or a homemade fruit juice in limited quantities.
3. **Limit fast food.** By preparing foods at home or eating at a restaurant where you can sit down, you are more likely to make healthier food choices. Choose salads with dressing on the side, use mustard instead of mayonnaise, and choose white meat over dark meat.



Photo: REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton,
NaturalWorldNews.com

4. **Check your plate.** Fill half your plate non-starchy vegetables. The other half, divide into two: lean proteins and carbohydrates such as brown rice or whole-grain pasta.
5. **Exercise.** Join your local YMCA, go for a bike ride as a family, dance to music, or play interactive video games on a Nintendo Wii.
6. **Limit time spent in front of a computer or television.** Some tablets allow you to set a timer so that you can limit how much time your child spends using electronics. Encourage your child to get up in the middle of commercials and walk around, do jumping jacks, or play in the backyard for a bit.
7. **Set goals and reward your child's success.** Sit with your child and set goals together. Remember to start small and always reward your child's successes with nonfood items. This could mean a sleepover, going shopping, or even a trip to a local theme park.



Photo: Pinterest.com

For more information, visit the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org.

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