

Type 2 Diabetes Rears Its Ugly Head Long Before Diagnosis

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Signs and symptoms of type 2 diabetes can present themselves as long as 10 years before diagnosis and most people have no idea before the damage is done.

“Diabetes damages blood vessels slowly over a period of time, much like termites roaming through the crevices of your house,” said Dr. Dale J. Hamilton, director of the Diabetes Heart Program at The Methodist Hospital in Houston. “Most people have no idea how serious these problems are until it’s too late.”

Type 2 is a condition where the body does not produce enough insulin and the cells ignore the insulin it does have. Insulin is essential for the body to be able to use glucose for energy. After eating, the body breaks down all of the sugars and starches into glucose, which is the fuel for the cells in the body. When glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into the cells, over time, damage to the heart, kidneys, nerves and eyes is likely. Type 2 is the most common and fast-growing form of diabetes.

The risk factors include:

- Blood pressure higher than 130 over 80.
- Waist line bigger than 35 inches in women, and 40 inches in men.
- HDL or “good” cholesterol less than 40 in men, and 50 in women.
- [Triglyceride levels](#) over 200.
- Fasting glucose over 100.

Some experts believe replacing sugar with high fructose corn syrup in processed foods in the United States and Canada in the 1990s has played a role in the rise of [type 2 diabetes](#) cases. High fructose corn syrup is made by changing the sugar in corn starch to fructose, another form of sugar. It has become popular because it extends the shelf life of processed foods and is cheaper than sugar. It has also become a popular ingredient in many sodas and fruit-flavored drinks.

“The problem with high fructose corn syrup is that it promotes central [obesity](#) or a big stomach, one of the major factors in type 2 diabetes,” Hamilton said. “Another problem with it is that it fools your body into thinking you are hungry. I don’t think you need to eliminate it from your diet, you just need to be aware of how much of it you are consuming on a daily basis because too much can lead to serious weight gain.”

There are some ways to rid your body of type 2 diabetes:

- Exercise at least 30 minutes at a time, five days a week.
- Lose weight.
- Talk to your doctor about medication to lower your triglycerides and LDL cholesterol.

Most patients with diabetes die from heart and blood vessel related problems, in particular heart attacks and strokes. The underlying causes of diabetes are often under treated because there is little or no pain involved.

“Having three or more of the risk factors associated with type 2 [diabetes](#) over an extended period of time is the equivalent of already having a heart attack,” Hamilton said. “These [risk factors](#) need to be treated aggressively in order to curb the problem and give you a better chance at a longer, healthier life.”

Source: Methodist Hospital, Houston

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