

Facts

Type 1 Diabetes Facts

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas. While its causes are not yet entirely understood, scientists believe that both genetic factors and environmental triggers are involved.

Affects Children and Adults

Type 1 diabetes usually strikes children, adolescents, and young adults, but it can be diagnosed in adults as well. It comes on suddenly, causes dependence on injected or pumped insulin for life, and carries the constant threat of devastating complications.

Needs Constant Attention

To stay alive, people with type 1 diabetes must take multiple insulin injections daily or continually infuse insulin through a pump. They must also test their blood sugar by pricking their fingers for blood six or more times a day. While trying to balance insulin doses with their food intake and daily activities, people with this form of diabetes still must always be prepared for serious hypoglycemic (low blood sugar) and hyperglycemic (high blood sugar) reactions, both of which can be life-limiting and life threatening.

Not Cured By Insulin

While insulin injections or infusions allow a person with type 1 to stay alive, they do not cure diabetes, nor do they necessarily prevent the possibility of the disease's devastating effects, which may include: kidney failure, blindness, nerve damage, amputations, heart attack, stroke, and pregnancy complications.

Difficult to Manage

Despite paying rigorous attention to maintaining a meal plan and exercise regimen and always injecting the proper amount of insulin, people with type 1 diabetes face many other factors that can adversely affect efforts to tightly control blood sugar levels. These factors include stress, hormonal changes, periods of growth, physical activity, medications, illness/infection, and fatigue.

Statistics

- As many as three million Americans may have type 1 diabetes.†
- Each year, more than 15,000 children – 40 per day – are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in the U.S.

Warning Signs

Warning signs of type 1 diabetes may occur suddenly and include:

- Extreme thirst
- Sudden vision changes
- Frequent urination
- Sugar in the urine
- Drowsiness or lethargy
- Fruity odor on the breath
- Increased appetite
- Heavy or labored breathing
- Sudden weight loss
- Stupor or unconsciousness

What is it Like to Have Type 1 Diabetes?

Ask people who have type 1 diabetes, and they will tell you: It's difficult. It's upsetting. It's life-threatening. It never goes away.

"Both children and adults like me who live with type 1 diabetes need to be mathematicians, physicians, personal trainers, and dieticians all rolled into one. We need to be constantly factoring and adjusting, making frequent finger sticks to check blood sugars, and giving ourselves multiple daily insulin injections just to stay alive."

— JDRF International Chairman Mary Tyler Moore

"This disease controls our lives with all the pricking of the fingers, shots, high and low blood sugars; it's like being on a seesaw. Without a cure, we will be stuck on this seesaw 'til the day we die."

— Tre Kawkins, 12, Michigan

"I never realized how much of my day would be spent dealing with this disease and all of its challenges."

— Patrick Lacher, 13, Connecticut

"A cure would give us freedom to carry on a normal life without taking a break to check our blood or have a snack."

— Asa Kelly, 16, North Carolina

† Type 1 Diabetes, 2004; KRC Research for JDRF, Jan. 2005