

## *Backgrounder*

### **About Diabetes**

Diabetes is a complex disease with multiple causes and no known cure. The three main types are:

- **Type 1** diabetes is found in five to 10 per cent of Canadians with diabetes, and occurs when the body is unable to produce insulin, a hormone that controls the level of glucose (sugar) in the blood. The cause of type 1 diabetes is unknown and it is not preventable. It most commonly begins in childhood and occurs when a person's immune system destroys the cells in the pancreas that make insulin.
- The most common type of diabetes is **type 2**, where the pancreas either cannot effectively use or produce enough insulin. It is found in approximately 90 per cent of Canadians living with diabetes. The causes of type 2 diabetes can be genetic, behavioural and/or environmental. It usually develops in adulthood, although more children and adolescents are being diagnosed, especially those in high-risk populations, such as Aboriginal Peoples and those of African, Asian, Hispanic or South Asian descent.
- **Gestational** diabetes is a temporary condition that develops during pregnancy. Blood glucose levels usually return to normal following delivery, however both mother and child are at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life.

**Prediabetes** occurs when an individual's blood glucose levels are elevated, but not yet at a level high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Approximately 50 per cent of those with prediabetes will go on to develop type 2 diabetes.

#### **Facts**

- **20** Canadians are diagnosed with diabetes every hour of every day
- Diabetes is the cause of:
  - **30 per cent** of strokes
  - **40 per cent** of heart attacks
  - **50 per cent** of kidney failure requiring dialysis
  - **70 per cent** of all non-traumatic limb amputations
  - Vision loss and blindness
- Having diabetes can shorten a Canadian's lifespan by five to 15 years

Nevertheless, with proper management, complications can potentially be prevented or delayed.

#### **Diabetes is growing**

Diabetes has reached epidemic proportions in Canada. Currently, more than nine million Canadians, or one in four, are living with diabetes or prediabetes—a number expected to rise to one in three by 2020.

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### Diabetes is a financial burden

Many people living with diabetes cannot afford to properly manage their disease—57 per cent of Canadians living with diabetes say they are unable to comply with their prescribed medical therapy. This is because they cannot afford costly medications, devices and supplies, potentially compromising their health.

## The epidemic and its cost

### Diabetes in Canada



### Signs

The signs and symptoms of diabetes include: unusual thirst, frequent urination, weight gain or loss, extreme tiredness or lack of energy, blurred vision, frequent or recurring infections, cuts and bruises that are slow to heal, and tingling or numbness in hands or feet.

### Risks of type 2 diabetes

- Aged 40 or older;
- A member of a high-risk group;
- Overweight, especially if you carry most of your weight around your middle

Or if you have:

- A parent or sibling with diabetes;
- Health complications that are associated with diabetes;
- Given birth to a baby that weighed more than 4 kg (9 lbs);
- Had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy);

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- Impaired glucose tolerance or impaired fasting glucose;
- High blood pressure;
- High cholesterol or other fats in the blood; or,
- Have been diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome, acanthosis nigricans (darkened patches of skin), or schizophrenia.

### **Contact us**

For additional information on diabetes and the Canadian Diabetes Association, visit [diabetes.ca](http://diabetes.ca) or call 1-800-BANTING (226-8464).