Diabetes 101
Diabetes is a condition in which the body does not properly use glucose for energy. Glucose, also called blood sugar, is the primary fuel source for your body. Most of the body's glucose comes from food, and is also made in the muscles and liver.

In order to be used, glucose has to move from the bloodstream into the cells. Normally, your body makes a hormone called insulin which helps the glucose enter cells to be used for energy.

With diabetes, the body either doesn’t make enough insulin, or can’t use the insulin properly. As a result, glucose builds up in the blood, and, if left untreated, can lead to serious health problems.

How could diabetes affect you?
Diabetes is one of the leading causes of death and disability in the U.S. Because the disease typically develops “silently,” usually without symptoms, many people with diabetes are not aware of the damage it can cause. Over time, diabetes can lead to the following health problems:

- Kidney disease
- Eye problems, including blindness
- Foot ulcers and amputations
- Nerve damage
- Skin infections
- Heart disease and other vessel blockages

Types of Diabetes
There are several forms of diabetes. Let’s look at the differences:

**Type 1 Diabetes**: The body does not make enough insulin. Type 1 Diabetes, also known as juvenile diabetes, cannot be prevented and is treated with injectable insulin.

**Type 2 Diabetes**: The body cannot properly use the insulin it makes. This form of diabetes is usually associated with obesity, physical inactivity, family history, or a personal history of gestational diabetes. Lifestyle changes may help prevent or lower the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

**Prediabetes**: A condition where blood sugar levels are elevated, but have not yet risen to the levels required for a diagnosis of diabetes.

**Gestational Diabetes**: High blood sugar that starts during pregnancy and may resolve with diet and exercise modifications.
Why are we focusing on Type 2 Diabetes?

In this workshop, we will focus on Type 2 Diabetes because you may be able to prevent or manage it through healthy lifestyle changes. We will go into more detail about these changes later on in the workshop.

Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes

- **Overweight or obese.** High levels of body fat can cause the cells to be resistant to insulin.
- **Inactivity.** A sedentary lifestyle can cause “insulin resistance.”
- **Family History.** The risk increases if a parent or sibling has Type 2 diabetes.
- **Age.** Risk increases with age – especially after age 45. But diabetes is also on the rise in younger Americans.
- **Race.** People of Hispanic, African-American, Asian and Native American heritage are at greater risk.
- **Gestational Diabetes:** A history of diabetes during pregnancy increases the risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes after pregnancy.

Why Should You Act Now?

If your doctor told you that you have prediabetes, now is the time to act! You may be able to stop the progression of the disease by making healthy lifestyle changes.

If you already have Type 2 Diabetes, controlling your blood sugar through diet and exercise can help reduce your symptoms and may slow the progression.

Now that you have completed Lesson 1, please proceed to the next lesson.

Sources