

## **DocTalk – Taking the Defense against Diabetes**

by Heather Bagley, PNP

**Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes.** Unfortunately, its escalation over recent years has made it an epidemic. In the past, type 2 has been referred to as adult onset diabetes because it was seen mostly in adults. Although its prevalence is still highest in the adult population, since the early 1990's the incidence of type 2 diabetes has increased in children and adolescents as well. In fact, the ADA states that, "one in three Caucasian-Americans and one in two minorities born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime if present trends continue".

So what is type 2 diabetes? Diabetes occurs when the levels of blood glucose (i.e. blood sugar) are too high and insulin is not working properly. Insulin is vital for the body's use of glucose. In type 1 diabetes the body does not produce insulin. In type 2 diabetes the body still produces insulin, but the cells of the body do not use it effectively. In other words, the cells become resistant to insulin. This resistance is seen even more with an increase in adipose (i.e. fat) tissue.

Today there are 57 million children and adults who have what is termed pre-diabetes. Pre-diabetes is diagnosed when blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to make the diagnosis of diabetes. Another term often used is "insulin resistance."

Factors that increase one's risk of developing type 2 diabetes include having a parent or sibling with diabetes; being overweight; having high blood pressure; having low levels of HDL (the "good" cholesterol); having high triglycerides; and/or having a history of gestational diabetes. Additionally, if you're ethnic background is American Indian, Alaskan Native, African American, Hispanic/Latino, or Pacific Islander you are at an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

The complications associated with this disease are numerous and include heart disease, stroke, blindness, and kidney disease, among other complications.

The good news is that you can reduce your chances or even prevent

diabetes altogether by implementing measures to change some of the risk factors. Maintaining a healthy weight or losing weight, if needed, has been studied extensively and is one of the main factors in preventing and treating type 2 diabetes. Making healthy food choices and having regular physical activity also can help deter the onset of diabetes. In fact, regular physical activity actually makes the body more sensitive to insulin, which puts the glucose in the cells where it is needed.

Screening tests should be performed, especially if you are at increased risk. Some of these tests available include a fasting blood glucose level, a hemoglobin A1C level, or an oral glucose tolerance test.

Make an appointment with your health care provider if you are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes to discuss ways you can help prevent diabetes. If you're a parent, keep an eye on your children's diet and level of exercise and most importantly, set a good example for them.

*Heather Bagley is a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Driggs Health Clinic.*