

Diabetes Myths

Myth: You can catch diabetes from someone else.

No. Diabetes is not contagious and cannot be caught like a cold or flu.

Myth: People with diabetes cannot eat sweets or chocolate.

Small servings of sweets can be worked into a healthy meal plan as part of a diabetic diet. A Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) or Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist (CDCES) can help you incorporate deserts and treats at special occasions.

Myth: Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.

Diabetes is caused by a combination of genetic and lifestyle factors. You do not "give yourself" diabetes simply by eating too much sugar. However, drinking a lot of sugar-sweetened drinks *has* been associated with type 2 diabetes, and being overweight -- which is more likely among people who drink large amounts of soft drinks -- does increase your risk of developing diabetes.

Myth: People with diabetes must use special diabetes recipes.

A healthy diet for people with diabetes looks the same as a healthy diet for anyone! Foods should be low in fat (especially saturated and trans-fat), moderate in salt and sugar, and should be based on whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. So-called "diabetic" versions of foods may contain sugar alcohols, which can cause gut pain or even cause a laxative effect.

Myth: If you have diabetes, you should avoid starchy foods, such as bread, potatoes, and pasta.

Whole grain breads, cereals, pasta, rice and starchy vegetables like potatoes, yams, peas and corn can be included in a diabetic diet. What is important is the *portion size*. Whole grain starchy foods are also a good source of fiber, which helps keep your healthy.

Myth #6: People with diabetes are more likely to be infected with viruses like colds and flu.

You are not more likely to become *infected* with a virus if you have diabetes. High blood sugar may interfere with your body's ability to fight a virus after you have been exposed. What is important to remember is that a person with diabetes is likely to feel worse, and become sicker, than other people.

Myth: Fruit is a healthy food, so it is ok to eat as much of it as you wish.

Part of this is true: fruit is a healthy food. It contains fiber and is packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and healthy compounds like antioxidants and flavonoids. However, because fruit contains carbohydrates, the amount of fruit you eat, and the time you eat it, should be planned within your daily diet.

Myth: You do not need to change your diabetes regimen unless your A1C is greater than 8 percent.

If your A1c is 8%, this means your average blood sugars over the last 2-3 months have been about 183 mg/dl. At this level, damage is occurring within your body. The American Diabetes Association recommends people with diabetes strive for an A1c of 7%, which puts your average blood sugar at a slightly increased level, but a level that is not likely to cause damage, and not likely to cause serious low blood sugar episodes.

Myth #9 Gestational diabetes (diabetes which develops during pregnancy) always goes away after the baby is born.

Gestational diabetes goes away after delivery for *most* women. A small number of women continue to have high blood sugar after delivery, indicating that they have developed Type 2 diabetes. Women who have had gestational diabetes are more likely to develop high blood sugars in future pregnancies and are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes in the future.

Myth #10 Hemoglobin A1c is the only laboratory test that needs to be monitored in people with diabetes.

Hemoglobin A1c is highly important, but it is also important to receive a medical evaluation for blood lipids like cholesterol, serum creatinine, and urine albumin. Only half of people with diabetes receive a yearly urine albumin screening, despite the test being an effective way to identify and slow the damage of early kidney disease.