



## Walk Away Diabetes Fact Sheet

**What is diabetes?** Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone made by the pancreas that the body uses to convert the food that you eat into energy needed for daily life.<sup>1</sup>

**Who has or is at risk for developing diabetes?** Diabetes currently affects **20.8 million children and adults** in the United States or approximately 7% of the population.<sup>1</sup> While we are all at risk for developing diabetes, there are some of us who are at a greater risk because of the following **known risk factors**:

- Family history
- Overweight/obesity as an adult or as a child
- Physical inactivity
- Gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy)
- Ethnicity (Diabetes is more common in African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders)

Take the diabetes risk test: <http://www.diabetes.org/risk-test.jsp>.

**What are the symptoms of diabetes?** Typical symptoms of diabetes include:

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Unusual weight loss
- Increased fatigue
- Irritability
- Blurry vision

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, please contact your healthcare provider.

**How is diabetes diagnosed?**

Diabetes is diagnosed with a “fasting blood glucose test” and is typically ordered by your healthcare provider after a complete history and physical exam. The only special requirement is that your blood be drawn after a complete 8 – 12 hour fast (overnight).

**Can walking help me manage or prevent diabetes?** Exercise, such as walking, can't hurt; studies show that *exercise does provide health benefits* to those with diabetes or who are trying to prevent the chronic disease.

Exercise also:

- Lowers blood glucose (sugar)
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers cholesterol
- Lowers risk for heart disease, stroke, and other chronic health problems
- Helps insulin work more effectively

For more information about the health benefits of “Physical Activity for People with Diabetes,” click here: <http://www.walkwithspirit.org/pdf/ADACardioReview8.pdf>.

<sup>1</sup> American Diabetes Association (ADA)

Walk with Spirit<sup>SM</sup> is a national program presented by the Spirit of Women<sup>®</sup> Hospital Network, a coalition of hospitals and healthcare providers across the United States that ascribe to the highest standards of excellence in women's health, education, and community outreach.