Diabetes is a group of diseases marked by high levels of blood glucose resulting from defects in insulin production, insulin action, or both. Diabetes can lead to serious complications and premature death.  

• The most common forms of diabetes are as follows
  » **Type 1 diabetes** accounts for about 5% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes. Type 1 is usually diagnosed in children and young adults, although it can occur at any time. People with type 1 diabetes must use insulin from an injection or a pump to manage their diabetes.  
  » **Type 2 diabetes** accounts for about 95% of all cases diagnosed in adults. Several studies have shown that healthy eating, regular physical activity, and weight loss used with medication if prescribed, can help control complications from type 2 diabetes or can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.  
  » **Gestational diabetes** is diagnosed in 2%–10% of pregnant women. Gestational diabetes can cause health problems during pregnancy for both the child and mother. Children whose mothers had gestational diabetes have an increased risk of developing obesity and type 2 diabetes. Although gestational diabetes often goes away after pregnancy, about half of all women who have gestational diabetes get type 2 diabetes later in life.  

• It is estimated that 12 million women aged 20 years and older have diabetes, and approximately 27 million have prediabetes.  

**Why Should Women Care About Diabetes?**  

**Women at High Risk for Diabetes:** Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, and Weight Loss  

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How Can Women Tell If They Are at High Risk for Diabetes?  

Women are at high risk for diabetes if they  

• Are overweight (body mass index of 25 kg/m² or greater) and have one or more additional risk factors, such as  
  » Low physical activity (less than 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, such as walking, per week).  
  » Family history of type 2 diabetes.  
  » High-risk race/ethnicity (African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander).  
  » Had a baby weighing 9 pounds or more or were diagnosed with gestational diabetes.  
  » High blood pressure (140/90 mmHg or higher).  
  » High cholesterol (240 mg/dL or higher).  
  » History of polycystic ovarian syndrome, a health problem that can affect a woman’s hormones, menstrual cycle, and ability to have children.
**Healthy Eating**

- Clinical conditions associated with insulin resistance, such as severe obesity, or the development of dark, thick skin in body folds and creases (a condition which is called ‘acanthosis nigricans’).
- History of cardiovascular disease.

- Have prediabetes.

**What Can Be Done to Reduce the Risk of Developing Type 2 Diabetes?**

Research has shown that the following lifestyle modifications can prevent, or at least delay the onset of type 2 diabetes among people at risk of diabetes.

- Eating fewer high fat and high calorie foods.
- Losing at least 5%-7% of body weight, if overweight or obese.
- Being physically active for 150 minutes every week.

**How Well Are Women At High Risk for Diabetes Doing?**

A study of women at high risk for diabetes indicated that

**Physical Activity**

- Only 1 of 4 women at high risk for diabetes reported that they exercised 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity (such as walking) per week.
- No evidence was found that women at high risk for diabetes of different races/ethnicities, educational attainment, or household income differed in how likely they were to be physically active for 150 minutes per week.

**Healthy Eating**

- 90% of obese Mexican American women with high cholesterol reported that they were advised by their healthcare provider to eat fewer high-fat or high cholesterol foods; only 78% of non-Hispanic whites were given the same advice.
- There were no significant differences by education among obese women who were given advice about eating fewer high-fat or high-cholesterol foods.
- Only 76% of obese women with middle income (200%–399% of Federal Poverty Level [FPL]) reported that they received advice to eat fewer high-fat or high cholesterol foods; 82% of high income (400% or more FPL) obese women reporting that they received this advice.

**Weight Loss**

- Only 50% of non-Hispanic black and Mexican American women at high risk for diabetes reported trying to lose weight in the past 12 months compared to 60% of non-Hispanic white women at high risk for diabetes.
- Women at high risk for diabetes with a high school education (57%) or less (47%) were less likely than women at high risk for diabetes with more than a high school education (63%) to report that they tried to lose weight in the past 12 months.
- 1 of 2 women at high risk for diabetes who were near poor (100%–199% FPL) or poor (<100% FPL) reported trying to lose weight in the past 12 months; whereas 1 of 3 women from high income families reported trying to lose weight in the past 12 months.

**To Learn More about Diabetes, Physical Activity, Healthy Eating, and Weight Loss, Please Visit the Following Web Sites:**

- **Diabetes**
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - National Diabetes Education Program
  - American Diabetes Association

- **Physical Activity**
  - Physical Activity: How Much Physical Activity do you Need?

- **Healthy Eating**
  - Nutrition for Everyone

- **Weight Loss**
  - Healthy Weight: It’s Not a Diet, It’s a Lifestyle