

## **TYPE 2 DIABETES**

### **What it Means for You**

#### **How does type 2 diabetes differ from type 1 diabetes?**

- In type 1 diabetes, the body's immune system destroys the cells in the pancreas that make insulin, so over time the body stops making insulin entirely. The exact cause of type 1 diabetes is not known.
- In type 2 diabetes, the body still makes insulin but just not enough of it, or the body can't properly use the insulin it does make. The reasons for this happening include being overweight, getting little or no exercise, or having the disease in one's family.

#### **Why is insulin so important?**

Insulin is the hormone that helps control the level of sugar (glucose) in the blood. If there isn't enough insulin produced, or the body can't use the insulin it does make (as is the case with type 2 diabetes), the sugar that comes from foods like bread, potatoes and fruit builds up in the blood. If left untreated, high blood sugar can harm many parts of the body, such as the eyes, heart, blood vessels, nerves and kidneys. It can also increase the risk for other health problems, like heart attack and stroke.

#### **How is type 2 diabetes treated?**

The key to treating type 2 diabetes is to keep your blood sugar levels at the right level. You can do this by:

- Making healthy food choices and trying to reduce and spread out the amount of carbohydrates you eat over the day.
- Drinking mainly water instead of artificially sweetened beverages.
- Losing weight, if you are overweight.
- Getting regular exercise.
- Taking medicines if your doctor says you need them.

It's also important to:

- See your doctor regularly to monitor your health and glucose levels.
- Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol under control.
- Quit smoking (if you smoke).

#### **What if I'm feeling overwhelmed?**

You might find it hard to accept that you have diabetes. It's normal to feel sadness, anger or even grief about having this disease and all the changes you need to make in your life. Remember that your health care team is there to help – a team that might include your family doctor, diabetes educator (nurse and/or dietitian) and pharmacist, to name a few. They can answer your questions about managing diabetes, work with you to adjust your eating, activity and medications, and provide support to help you cope with your emotions and take charge of your condition.

#### **Sources:**

- 1) Canadian Diabetes Association. Living with Type 2 diabetes. 2018. <http://www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/living-with-type-2-diabetes>;
- 2) HealthLinkBC. Type 2 Diabetes. 2017. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/hw135189>

