

Glossary of Terms: Common Diabetes-related Terms and Their Definitions

(Adapted from the American Diabetes Association Glossary)

A1C

An A1C test measures a person's average blood glucose level over two to three months. Hemoglobin is the part of a red blood cell that carries oxygen to the cells and sometimes joins with the glucose in the bloodstream. Also called hemoglobin A1C or glycosylated hemoglobin, the test shows the amount of glucose that sticks to the red blood cell, which is proportional to the amount of glucose in the blood.

Ace Inhibitor

An ace inhibitor is an oral medicine that lowers blood pressure. ACE stands for angiotensin (an-converting enzyme). For people with diabetes, especially those who have protein (albumin) in the urine, it also helps slow down kidney damage.

Adult-onset Diabetes

Former term for type 2 diabetes.

Arteriosclerosis

Hardening of the arteries.

Atherosclerosis

Clogging, narrowing and hardening of the body's large arteries and medium-sized blood vessels. Atherosclerosis can lead to stroke, heart attack, eye problems, and kidney problems.

Autonomic Neuropathy

A type of neuropathy affecting the lungs, heart, stomach, intestines, bladder or genitals.

Blood Glucose

The main sugar found in the blood and the body's main source of energy. Also called blood sugar.

Blood Glucose Level

The amount of glucose in a given amount of blood. It is noted in milligrams in a deciliter (mg/dL).

Blood Glucose Meter

A small, portable machine used by people with diabetes to check their blood glucose levels. After pricking the skin with a lancet, a drop of blood is placed on a test strip in the machine. The meter (or monitor) displays the blood glucose level on a digital display.

Blood Glucose Monitoring

Checking blood glucose level on a regular basis to manage diabetes. A blood glucose meter (or monitor) is needed for frequent blood glucose monitoring.

Body Mass Index

A measure used to evaluate body weight relative to a person's height. BMI is used to determine if a person is underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese.

Carbohydrate

One of three main nutrients in food. Foods that provide carbohydrates are starches, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, and sugars.

Carbohydrate Counting

A method of meal planning for people with diabetes based on counting the number of grams of carbohydrate in food.

Cardiometabolic Risk Factors

A set of conditions that have a big effect on whether a person develops diabetes or heart disease.

Cardiovascular Disease

Disease of the heart and blood vessels (arteries, veins, capillaries).

Cataract

The clouding of the lens of the eye.

Cerebrovascular Disease

Damage to blood vessels in the brain. Vessels can burst and bleed or become clogged with fatty deposits. When blood flow is interrupted, brain cells die or are damaged, resulting in strokes.

Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE)

A health professional with expertise in diabetes education who has met eligibility requirements and successfully completed a certification exam.

Cholesterol

A type of fat produced by the liver and found in the blood. It is also found in some foods. Cholesterol is used by the body to make hormones and build cell walls.

Complications

Harmful effects of diabetes such as damage to the eyes, heart, blood vessels, nervous system, teeth and gums, feet and skin, or kidneys. Studies show that keeping blood glucose, blood pressure, and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels close to normal can help prevent or delay complications.

Coronary Heart Disease

Heart disease caused by narrowing of the arteries that supply blood to the heart. If the blood supply is cut off, heart attack results.

Diabetes Mellitus

A condition characterized by hyperglycemia resulting from the body's inability to use blood glucose for energy. In Type 1 diabetes, the pancreas no longer makes insulin and therefore blood glucose cannot enter the cells to be used for energy. In Type 2 diabetes, either the pancreas does not make enough insulin or the body is unable to use insulin correctly.

Diabetes Prevention Program

A study by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases conducted from 1998 to 2001 in people at high risk for Type 2 diabetes. All study participants had impaired glucose tolerance, also called prediabetes, and were overweight. The study showed that people who lost five to seven percent of their body weight through a low-fat, low-calorie diet and moderate exercise (usually walking for 30 minutes five days a week) reduced their risk of getting Type 2 diabetes by 58 percent. Participants who received treatment with the oral diabetes drug metformin reduced their risk of getting Type 2 diabetes by 31 percent.

Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic eye disease; damage to the small blood vessels of the retina. Loss of vision may result.

Dietitian

A health care professional who advises people about meal planning, weight control, and diabetes management. A registered dietitian (RD) has more training.

Endocrinologist

A doctor who treats people who have endocrine problems such as diabetes.

Fasting Glucose Test

A check of blood glucose level following an 8-12 hour fast. This test is used to diagnose prediabetes and diabetes. It is also used to monitor the health of people with diabetes.

Fat

One of the three main nutrients in food. Examples of foods that provide fat are butter, margarine, salad dressing, oil, nuts, meat, poultry, fish and some dairy products. Excess calories are stored as body fat, providing the body with a reserve supply of energy and other functions.

Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM)

A type of diabetes mellitus that develops only during pregnancy and usually disappears upon delivery, but increases the risk that the mother will develop diabetes later. GDM is managed with meal planning, activity, and, in some cases, insulin.

Glaucoma

An increase of fluid pressure inside the eye that may lead to loss of vision.

Glucose

One of the simplest forms of sugar.

Hyperglycemia

Excessive blood glucose. Fasting hyperglycemia is blood glucose above a desirable level after a person has fasted for at least eight hours. Postprandial hyperglycemia is blood glucose above a desirable level one to two hours after a person has eaten.

Hyperinsulinemia

A condition in which the level of insulin in the blood is higher than normal. Caused by overproduction of insulin by the body.

Hyperlipidemia

Higher than normal fat and cholesterol levels in the blood.

Hypertension

A condition present when blood flows through the blood vessels with a force greater than normal. Also called high blood pressure. Hypertension can strain the heart, damage blood vessels, and increase the risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney problems and death.

Hypoglycemia

A condition that occurs when blood glucose is lower than normal, usually less than 70 mg/dL. Signs include hunger, nervousness, shakiness, perspiration, dizziness, or light-headedness, sleepiness, and confusion. If left untreated, hypoglycemia may lead to unconsciousness. Hypoglycemia is treated by consuming a carbohydrate-rich food, such as a glucose tablet or juice. It may also be treated with an injection of glucagon if the person is unconscious or unable to swallow. Also called an insulin reaction.

Insulin-dependent Diabetes Mellitus (IDDM)

Former term for type 1 diabetes.

Metabolic Syndrome

The tendency of several conditions to occur together, including obesity, insulin resistance, prediabetes or diabetes, hypertension, and high lipids.

National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP)

A year-long, cost-effective, evidence-based program, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), designed to help participants with prediabetes make real lifestyle changes such as eating healthier, including physical activity in their daily lives, and improving problem-solving and coping skills. Participants meet with a trained lifestyle coach and a small group of people who are making lifestyle changes to prevent diabetes. Sessions are weekly for six months and then monthly for six months. CDC-recognized programs can help people with prediabetes and/or at risk for type 2 diabetes make achievable and realistic lifestyle changes and cut their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58 percent.

Neuropathy

Disease of the nervous system. The three major forms in people with diabetes are peripheral neuropathy, autonomic neuropathy, and mononeuropathy. The most common form is peripheral neuropathy, which affects mainly the legs and feet.

Nutritionist

A person with training in nutrition; may or may not have specialized training and qualifications. See dietitian.

Obesity

A condition in which a greater than normal amount of fat is in the body, and is more severe than overweight. Having a BMI of 30 or more indicates obesity.

Overweight

An above-normal body weight, having a BMI of 25-29.9.

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Peripheral Neuropathy

Nerve damage that affects the feet, legs or hands. Peripheral neuropathy causes pain, numbness, or tingling.

Prediabetes

A condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be called diabetes. People with prediabetes are at great risk of developing type 2 diabetes, a leading cause of disability and death in the U.S. Other names for prediabetes are impaired glucose tolerance and impaired fasting glucose.

Protein

One of the three main nutrients in food. Examples of foods that provide protein include meat, poultry, fish, cheese, milk, dairy products, eggs, and dried beans. Proteins are also used in the body for cell structure, hormones such as insulin, and other functions.

Recognized Diabetes Education Programs

Diabetes self-management programs that are approved by the American Diabetes Association and/or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Self-management

In prediabetes and diabetes, the ongoing process of managing risks and disease. Includes meal planning, physical activity, blood glucose monitoring, taking diabetes medicines, handling episodes of illness and of low and high blood glucose, managing diabetes when traveling, and more. Diabetes patients design their own self-management treatment plan in consultation with a variety of health care professionals such as doctors, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, and others.

Type 1 Diabetes

A condition characterized by high blood glucose levels caused by a total lack of insulin. This occurs when the body's immune system attacks the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas and destroys them. The pancreas then produces little or no insulin. Type 1 diabetes develops most often in young people but can appear in adults.

Type 2 Diabetes

A condition characterized by high blood glucose levels caused by either a lack of insulin or the body's inability to use insulin efficiently. Type 2 diabetes develops most often in middle-aged and older adults but can appear in young people.

For More Information:

Grantee Organization

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email

Website

www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention