

IMPORTANT THINGS

FOR SOUTH ASIAN* WOMEN TO KNOW

ABOUT DIABETES

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition when the body either does not make insulin (**Type 1 diabetes**) or is not able to use the insulin it makes (**Type 2 diabetes**). The body's cells cannot use glucose for energy, and blood glucose (BG) levels rise.

Prediabetes is when the BG levels are higher than people without diabetes, but not yet high enough to be considered diabetes. It increases the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. **Gestational diabetes** occurs during pregnancy. Up to 10% of all pregnancies may end up with this condition. About 50% of women with gestational diabetes eventually develop Type 2 diabetes.



Why should you manage your diabetes?

Symptoms may be silent for many years until you don't feel well or notice other illnesses. Untreated diabetes (prolong high BG levels) can lead to other health conditions such as:

- Eye disease (diabetic retinopathy, diabetic macular edema (DME), glaucoma, cataracts)
- Kidney damage and chronic kidney disease (CKD)
- Heart disease (cardiovascular disease, or CVD)
- Neuropathy (nerve damage)

Have you experienced depression or distress?

Women with any type of diabetes have a higher risk of depression compared to women without diabetes. As primary caregivers in most families, women have a higher burden of the disease. They may experience depression with sadness, anxiety, and helplessness.

What can you do? Try regular physical activity such as walking, biking, or dancing; talking to loved ones about how you feel; and finding peer support with other women who live with diabetes.

Note: One in seven South Asian women in the US lives with diabetes. **You are not alone.**

What supports can improve health and quality of life?

- Your family may provide emotional encouragement.
- Peer support from groups, individuals, and/or online can also offer space to share common diabetes challenges, discuss solutions, and celebrate successes.

How to manage your diabetes?

Self-care is important

- Monitor your BG levels regularly
- Attend to your health needs – pay attention to food choices & carb counting, take medication consistently, and include some physical activity in your daily routine
- Make time to rest and relax

Keep in touch with your health care team

- Primary care doctor or endocrinologist (diabetes specialist)
- Cardiologist (heart specialist)
- Nephrologist (kidney specialist)
- Ophthalmologist (eye specialist)
- Podiatrist (foot specialist)
- Dietitian (preferably South Asian to help with food choices)
- Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist (CDCES)

If using Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

- Discuss all CAM options you are using with your care team and make sure to closely monitor your BG.
- Eastern medicine promotes use of many herbs, seeds, fruit, vegetables and their juices as a cure for diabetes. Note there is little research or evidence about how effective they are.

Bottom Line

While there is no cure for diabetes, with treatment you can care for yourself and thrive. Managing diabetes, working with your care team, finding peer support, and seeking assistance teaches your loved ones how to care for themselves too.

**India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh*