

# What Is Type 1 Diabetes?

Whether you were a child or an adult when you found out that you have type 1 diabetes, learning all you can about type 1 diabetes can give you the reasons to keep doing what you need to do to stay healthy.

As you probably know, type 1 diabetes means your pancreas no longer makes enough insulin. Insulin helps the body use the sugar from food as energy or store it for later use. Without insulin, too much sugar stays in the blood. And that can mean you don't feel well.

You may feel tired or hungry and be very thirsty. And you may need to urinate a lot. Sometimes, usually before they're diagnosed, people without insulin in their bodies need to get emergency treatments of insulin and fluids at a hospital.

Over time, high blood sugar can harm different parts of the body. These include the eyes, heart, blood vessels, nerves, and kidneys. Now, type 1 diabetes needs to be treated with insulin.

You'll be taught how to use an insulin pen or pump or how to give insulin shots to do the work that your pancreas no longer can. The amount of insulin you'll need depends on what you're eating and your blood sugar levels.

That's why checking your blood sugar levels is such a big part of caring for yourself. You'll do that with a finger-stick blood test or a continuous glucose monitor—a CGM. A CGM constantly measures your blood sugar so you can easily see what your blood sugar level is and if it's going up or down.

Here's the thing: When you first find out you have type 1 diabetes, it can take some time to get used to everything you have to do. But with time, the things you need to do to care for yourself will get easier and become part of your normal routine.

And here's another thing about diabetes: It can be unpredictable. You may find that each day is different. How much insulin you need today may change tomorrow. But even the ups and downs will become routine.

Along with taking insulin and watching your blood sugar, it's helpful to make healthy food choices and to try to be more active. Healthy foods and activities you enjoy can help make insulin work better and more efficiently.

It's like giving your body a little extra support and care. Managing your life with type 1 diabetes can feel like a lot, but many people find that changing how they think about type 1 diabetes can help.

For example, thinking of your insulin as what's keeping you alive may sound dramatic— but it's true. And the CGM or finger-stick test may hurt for a second, but think of them as being like the window you use to see what's happening in your blood.

You could even try thinking of all the tools and technology you need as important accessories— just like your keys, phone, or sunglasses. You may have other ideas that could work better for you. But with information, care, and time, you can manage your type 1 diabetes and live a long, healthy, happy life.