

# World Diabetes Day: how to prevent the disease?

Written by: Horiens - 08/11/2023

Did you know that 1 in 10 people are currently living with diabetes, and the majority of these cases are type 2 diabetes, a disease strongly related to lifestyle and, therefore, preventable?

According to the Ministry of Health, Brazil is the fifth country in the world in terms of diabetes incidence, with 16.8 million adult patients (aged 20 to 79).

Among the types of the disease, the best known are type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Less prevalent, type 1 is considered an autoimmune disease and is usually detected in childhood. Type 2 is the most common and is mainly linked to lifestyle.

The disease affects quality of life if it is not treated properly, which is very common, since at least half of all cases go undiagnosed due to the absence of symptoms or the difficulty of identifying them.

“On November 14, World Diabetes Day, it's important to bring up a warning: it is possible to prevent diabetes. With the right information and lifestyle adjustments, we can stay away from this disease, which brings major health complications,” says Dr. Eduardo Motta, Horiens' partner doctor.

## What is diabetes in the first place?

Diabetes develops when the body is unable to control blood sugar levels. This happens because the pancreas stops producing or produces insufficient insulin, the hormone responsible for transporting glucose into the cells, where it is transformed into energy. Lack of control increases blood glucose levels and can lead to diabetes.

## What are the health risks?

The harms are numerous, especially the increase in cardiovascular complications, which can lead to heart attacks, heart failure, and stroke, in addition to being related to periodontal diseases and being one of the main causes of chronic kidney disease.

## What increases the chance of developing the disease?

- Overweight and obesity (including in children)
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Parents or siblings with diabetes
- Hypertension
- History of cardiovascular disease
- Delivery of a baby weighing more than 4 kg or having had gestational diabetes

- High cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- Polycystic ovary syndrome
- Sleep apnea
- Medications, such as cortisone-based drugs
- Emotional stress

### **What are the warning signs?**

- Frequent hunger
- Constant thirst
- Excessive urge to urinate, especially at night
- Tingling in the feet and hands
- Frequent bladder, kidney and skin infections
- Wounds that take a long time to heal
- Blurred vision
- Constant tiredness
- Genital infections (especially candidiasis)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Warning: it is common for many people not to identify or show symptoms!

### **How to avoid it?**

Get moving!

- Practice moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity for at least 150 minutes a week and at least 3 times a week.
- If there are no contraindications, do resistance training 2-3 times a week on non-consecutive days.
- Reduce your sedentary lifestyle throughout the day by taking breaks from sitting every 30 minutes.
- Elderly people should also do flexibility and balance training 2-3 times a week.

Adopt a healthy diet and control the glycemic index of your meals

- Prioritize a balanced diet, increasing your intake of legumes, vegetables and fiber in general and reducing your intake of fried foods, sugars, refined carbohydrates, processed foods and alcoholic beverages.
- Consume the right amount of protein. To find out how much is recommended for you, consult a specialist.

Get regular medical check-ups to monitor your health.

- Pay attention to prediabetes, a condition in which blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be classified as type 2 diabetes. The diagnosis is made through tests such as fasting blood sugar, glucose tolerance test, and hemoglobin A1c, among others.