

Dear Families:

Diabetes is hurting our kids. We are finding more children and teens who are suffering from the kind of diabetes that used to only happen in adults (called Type 2 Diabetes).

What is diabetes?

Our bodies change the food we eat into sugar. This sugar gets into our blood. It is fuel for our muscles and other body parts, like gas for a car. Our bodies use sugar for energy. Diabetes stops the body from using blood sugar for fuel. Instead, sugar stays in the blood. High blood sugar can damage the heart, eyes, kidneys and nerves. It can lead to serious health problems. Too much sugar in the blood can even start to cause problems before diabetes happens.

Will my child get Type 2 diabetes?

Your child has a greater chance of getting Type 2 diabetes if he or she:

- is overweight
- has a family member with diabetes
- is Hispanic American, African American, Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander

What signs of Type 2 diabetes should I look for in my child?

Major physical signs found in many children with Type 2 diabetes are:

- overweight
- high blood pressure
- light brown-black, rough or thickened areas on the surface of the skin. This skin condition is called is called acanthosis nigricans. It is usually seen on the back and sides of the neck. Sometimes parents think that their child is not bathing properly and that their child has a dirty neck. Acanthosis is also found on the armpits, knuckles, elbows, knees and groin area.

Other less noticed signs are:

- being tired all the time
- getting up more than once a night to go to the bathroom
- sudden changes in weight (gain or loss)
- bladder infections
- skin infections
- in girls, yeast infections that keep coming back

What can I do to stop Type 2 Diabetes and protect my children?

- Families should seek medical care if they think their children or they are at risk for diabetes.
- Avoid being overweight. It's the single most important thing a family can do to stop diabetes. Physical activity and healthy eating are the only ways to control weight.
- In an effort to help parents recognize children at risk for diabetes, the state has mandated screening for acanthosis nigricans. This screening will occur as a part of the vision/hearing screening done at grades 1, 3, 5, and 7. The school nurse will perform this screening by visually examining each child's neck. Children found to have the identifying skin marker will be individually assessed for height, weight, and blood pressure. The school nurse will send a written referral to parents/guardians of children with acanthosis nigricans.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this screening, please contact the nurse on your campus or Health Services at 356-9244.

Source: Daniel E. Hale, M.D.; Cynthia Trevino, RN; Mark M. Danney, M.D., The Children's Center at the Texas Diabetes Institute, San Antonio, Texas