

High Blood Sugar

High blood sugar means having too much sugar, also called glucose, in the blood. High blood sugar is also called hyperglycemia. The body's cells need blood sugar. A normal blood sugar level is 70 to 100. A blood sugar level above 140 is too high. You may not feel any signs of high blood sugar but damage may be happening to your body. Over time, high blood sugar can damage the eyes, kidneys, blood vessels, heart, nerves and feet.

Causes

High blood sugar can happen with diabetes. When you have diabetes, your body does not make enough insulin or is not able to use the body's insulin as it should. The right amount of insulin is needed to let the sugar that is in your blood go into your cells. Without insulin, blood sugar will rise and cause high blood sugar, or hyperglycemia. High blood sugar can get worse because of:

- Stress
- Infection or illness
- Certain medicines such as steroids
- Pregnancy

The most common reasons for high blood sugar in people with diabetes are:

- Not taking enough insulin or diabetes pills
- Missed, skipped or late diabetes medicine
- Eating too much food
- Eating foods high in sugar or carbohydrates

Signs

High blood sugar affects people differently. Some people have no warning signs. High blood sugar may happen slowly over time.

You may have one or more signs of high blood sugar. Family members may notice these signs before you do.

- Extreme thirst
- Urinate often
- Increased hunger
- Blurred vision
- Weight loss or gain
- Feeling tired or sleepy
- Feeling moody or grumpy
- Slow healing of wounds

- Numbness in feet or hands
- Vaginal itching or infections
- Impotence
- Skin itching
- Skin infections such as boils

Your Care

See your doctor if you have signs of high blood sugar. Talk to your doctor about the cause of your high blood sugar. You may need to take medicine to control your blood sugar, or you may need to change how you eat and exercise.

If you have diabetes, control high blood sugar by following your diabetes treatment plan:

- Follow your meal plan.
- Take your insulin and pills as directed.
- Test your blood sugar often and keep a record of the results.
- Follow your activity or exercise routine.
- Contact your doctor if you see patterns of high blood sugar.
- Follow your sick day plan if you are ill.

If not treated, high blood sugar could lead to coma or even death.

Talk to your doctor, nurse or diabetes educator if you have any questions or concerns.