

The UConn Buzz



November is Diabetes Awareness Month

Diabetes is a challenging disease that affects a person's entire life. It can cause serious health complications including heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, and lower-extremity amputations.

Diabetes affects nearly 29 million Americans, or nearly 1 in 11 people. An estimated 86 million people are at risk for developing the disease, and it is the [7th leading cause of death](#) in America - more than AIDS and breast cancer combined. In Connecticut, 8% of the population has been diagnosed with diabetes.

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose (sugar) levels are above normal. The hormone insulin helps glucose get into the cells of our bodies. The glucose gives the body energy. When someone has diabetes, their body does not make enough insulin (Type 1) or cannot use its own insulin as well as it should (Type 2). Sugar builds up in the blood instead of being used effectively by the body.

Type 1 Diabetes

With type 1 diabetes, your body not able to make insulin or enough insulin because the body's immune system has attacked and destroyed the cells that make insulin. Therefore, your body is not able to utilize energy from the food you eat and fuel your cells properly without the help of additional insulin.

Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes usually begins with insulin resistance. This is a condition that occurs when fat, muscle, and liver cells do not respond properly to insulin and cannot carry glucose into the body's cells to use for energy. The pancreas tries to overcompensate by producing needs more insulin to help glucose enter cells. At first, your body keeps up with the added demand by making more insulin. Over time, your body doesn't make enough insulin when blood sugar levels increase. If your body can no longer make enough insulin, you will need to treat your type 2 diabetes. Peo-

ple who are overweight and inactive are also more likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes can develop when a woman is pregnant. Due to changes in hormones from pregnancy changes occur with the body's insulin production and use. If the pancreas doesn't make enough insulin during pregnancy to fuel her cells and the baby, a woman develops gestational diabetes. Overweight or obese women have a higher chance of gestational diabetes. Also, gaining too much weight during pregnancy may increase your likelihood of developing gestational diabetes.

Gestational diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born. However, a woman who has had gestational diabetes is at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life. Babies born to mothers who had gestational diabetes are also more likely to develop obesity and type 2 diabetes.

More information about diabetes and pregnancy is provided in the NIDDK health topic, [What I need to know about Gestational Diabetes](#).

Prediabetes

[Prediabetes](#) is when the amount of glucose in your blood is above normal yet not high enough to be called diabetes. With prediabetes, your chances of getting type 2 diabetes is high. With some weight loss and moderate physical activity, you can delay or prevent type 2 diabetes. You can even return to normal glucose levels, possibly without taking any medications.

Some people with diabetes don't have any signs or symptoms. The only way to know is with a blood test.

Diabetes can affect anyone, so it's important to see your doctor regularly to get the tests and checkups you need to make sure you stay in the clear. Talk with your doctor if you have any common symptoms of diabetes such as frequent urination, increased thirst, cuts that don't heal, or blurry vision.

The good news is that there are lots of ways you can reduce your risk for developing diabetes. Even small changes - such as losing a little amount of weight and becoming more active - can go a long way in preventing type 2 diabetes, as well as managing the disease. Quitting smoking, lowering the amount of alcohol you drink and cutting back on fruit juices, soda and other sugary beverages can have a dramatic impact on your risk for developing the disease as well. If you're trying to reduce the amount of sugary beverages you consume, EHHD suggests reaching for a glass of water with cut up fruit or cucumbers instead of soda, or grabbing a whole orange instead of a glass of orange juice. You can lower your risk by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, and focusing on foods that don't have any sugar. Foods such as lean protein (fish, poultry and lean red meats) and healthy fats (avocado and olive oil) can help keep your body healthy. Additionally, replacing packaged snack food with fresh options such as a piece of fruit or vegetables dipped in hummus will give your body the nutrients it needs for optimal health. Replacing refined, white flour foods, such as baked goods or white bread, with whole grain and high fiber choices such as whole grain bread and quinoa will give your body the fiber it needs to keep your blood sugar steady and help you stay clear of or manage your diabetes.

EHHD's website has a page dedicated to American Diabetes Month (www.ehhd.org/diabetesawareness-) Here you will find a link to diabetes awareness events happening in Connecticut during the month of November, learn more about making a plan to prevent type 2 diabetes, find information on risk factors for diabetes, and access delicious and healthy recipes.

HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

Halloween Candy Buy Back [for the Troops](#) Nov. 1st-3rd

**[Patriot Race 4-Mile](#)
Nov. 12, Coventry**

Sources for this issue of The Buzz include:

American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology,
The Mayo Clinic, National Institute of Diabetes, &
Digestive & Kidney Diseases; Food Allergy Research &
Education (FARE), Gluten Intolerance Group, and the
American Diabetes Association

DID YOU KNOW?

Halloween can be very dangerous for kids with food allergies.

The [Teal Pumpkin Project](#) is trying to make sure all children can enjoy Halloween.

[Here](#) are some idea for non-food treats to give out.

Allergy Friendly Mac & "Cheese"

Ingredients

- 1-16 oz pkg gluten-free brown rice pasta
- 2 cups unsweetened milk substitute, such as rice or coconut milk
- 1/4 cup dairy-free, soy-free margarine
- 1 or 2 - 8 oz pkg shredded dairy-free cheddar cheese
- 4 oz dairy-free cream cheese (optional)
- 1/2 tsp salt

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Cook pasta until somewhat firm. Return pasta to pot.
3. Add unsweetened milk substitute and margarine. Heat until simmering and add cheese alternative(s), stirring until cheeses are melted and mixture is fairly uniform. Add salt and any other desired spices. Stir.
4. Transfer entire mixture to a 9" X 13" dish and cover with foil. Bake at 350 °F for 30 minutes or until bubbly.



Gluten Health Concerns

Gluten is a protein naturally found in wheat, rye and barley. It is primarily found in foods, such as bread, pasta, cookies, and cakes. There are several health issues related to gluten that can affect a person.

[Celiac disease](#) is an autoimmune disorder in which gluten can cause damage to the small intestine when it is ingested. The most common symptoms for Celiac include diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss, bloating, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. Celiac disease is diagnosed through a blood test ordered by your health care provider and treated with antibiotics and a gluten-free diet.

[Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity](#) is when a person experiences symptoms similar to Celiac disease, but does not test positive for Celiac. The symptoms are uncomfortable, however they do not damage the intestines the way Celiac disease does. The issue resolves when they remove gluten from their diet.

[Wheat allergy](#) is an immune reaction to the protein(s) in wheat. The reaction can happen very fast. Symptoms include hives, or skin rash, nausea, sneezing, headaches and potentially [anaphylaxis](#), which can be life threatening. Diagnosis can be made from a skin test or a blood test.

Diet is an important part to treating all of these issues, so be sure to read food labels, ask about the food you will be ordering at restaurants to be sure you are get-

ting the gluten-free option. Talk with your Healthcare Provider to see if you should be avoiding gluten in your diet.

For more information about [food allergies](#) please check the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology website.

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Phone: 860.429.3361 Email: be_well@ehhd.org

