



DEPARTMENT OF **PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

November 2025 Nutrition Article **Diabetes Awareness Month**

November is American Diabetes Month — a time to raise awareness about diabetes. It is well known that diabetes is one of the fastest-growing chronic diseases in the world, and the latest stats reveal that nearly one in two Americans has diabetes or prediabetes.

The 2025 Diabetes Awareness Month also marks the 85th anniversary of the American Diabetes Association (ADA), the leading voluntary health organization fighting to end diabetes and helping people thrive.

Diabetes affects millions of Americans and is a leading cause of serious complications, including kidney failure, lower-limb amputations, adult blindness, and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. This year's campaign is called "Taking Action to Prevent Diabetes-Related Health Problems," focusing on raising awareness about diabetes and its impacts.

Diabetes Stats in Older Adults

Diabetes is a prevalent chronic condition among older adults, affecting approximately 33% of folks aged 65 and older. Regardless of age, diabetes occurs when the body cannot properly use insulin, leading to elevated blood glucose levels.

Two main types of diabetes affect older adults: Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1 is less common in older adults and occurs when the body produces little or no insulin. It typically begins in childhood or young adulthood — although it can be diagnosed later in life.

Type 2 is the most prevalent in older adults, where the body's cells do not respond effectively to insulin. Risk factors for older adults and diabetes include obesity, a sedentary lifestyle, genetic factors, and certain ethnic backgrounds. According to the ADA, the number of older adults living with diabetes is expected to increase rapidly in the coming decades.

Fighting Diabetes at Any Age

With so many factors to consider, it is easiest to understand our own risks by understanding the connection between inflammation and disease — more specifically, the connection between inflammation and diabetes. Inflammation plays a significant role in the development and progression of diabetes, particularly Type 2, by affecting insulin sensitivity and blood-sugar regulation.

It's important to remember inflammation is a natural immune response to injury or infection. Acute inflammation is short-lived and beneficial, while chronic inflammation persists over time and can lead to tissue damage and various health issues, including diabetes.

Chronic inflammation is the root of all diseases, including diabetes, and older adults can use anti-inflammatory measures (i.e. lifestyle changes) to prevent or manage diabetes. This includes diet, exercise, sleep, stress management, and tobacco use. Although there's no cure for diabetes, studies show it's possible for some people to reverse it. Even if diabetes is in remission, there's always a chance it will return.

Older adults face unique challenges in managing diabetes. These include increased risk of complications of other diseases, difficulties with medication as their bodies may not respond as effectively, cognitive impairment that hinders self-management, greater risk of low blood sugar because symptoms may be less noticeable, and physical limitations that reduce their ability to care for themselves or engage in the recommended physical activity to regulate insulin levels.

Using Food as Medicine

Healthy eating is important for preventing chronic disease, including diabetes. It helps people feel their best and manage – or possibly reverse – complications. The idea of “food is medicine” highlights how diet directly impacts health.

Key principles include focusing on whole foods, eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and quality proteins, personalizing choices, and establishing a regular eating schedule even when hunger signals are absent. Despite widespread misinformation, nutritious meals are essential for stabilizing blood sugar levels and preventing complications.

A balanced diet rich in high-fiber carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fats supports overall health and well-being. By focusing on nutrient-dense foods, older adults can enhance their quality of life and maintain better health for longer. Contrary to popular belief, substituting with alternative sweeteners, avoiding natural sugars in fruit, and trying to lose weight on a “low carb/high protein” diet only promotes inflammation, ultimately promoting diabetes. Using the dietary guidelines at [dietaryguidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov), older adults can learn about a variety of wholesome foods. These include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, high-quality proteins, and dairy products. Eating this way promotes healthy living and helps prevent and manage diabetes.

Importance of Physical Activity

Staying active as you age is crucial for maintaining physical, emotional, and cognitive wellness. Regular physical activity – regardless of duration or intensity – helps to manage and reduce the risk of diabetes by fighting inflammation and stabilizing blood sugar. Exercise is also a crucial component of managing diabetes in older adults. It offers numerous health benefits, including improved blood sugar control, weight management, increased strength, and enhanced mental health. Regular physical activity helps regulate insulin sensitivity and blood sugar levels, reduces the risk of other diseases, and improves overall wellness. It boosts self-esteem, quality of life, and independence. Older adults with diabetes should choose activities that are enjoyable and safe.

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Recipe of the Month: Easy Chicken Soup

Soup is an easy way to get nourishment, eat less expensively, and have leftovers for days.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb. chicken breast or thighs
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 cup carrots, chopped
- 1Tbsp butter or olive oil
- 1-2 cups potatoes, diced
- Vegetable or chicken broth, enough to cover all ingredients
- Salt, pepper, rosemary, and oregano to taste

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Cook and shred or chop chicken.
2. In a large pot, sauté onion, garlic, celery, and carrots in butter or olive oil until soft.
3. Add potatoes and enough broth to cover all ingredients.
4. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Bring to a boil and let simmer until potatoes are cooked.
6. Stir in chicken and add herbs to taste.

