

## FACTSHEET ON DIABETES

### What is Diabetes?

- Diabetes is a life-long disease characterised by raised blood sugar levels. Diabetes results from the body not being able to produce enough insulin (the hormone which converts sugar to energy in muscle cells) or use it effectively.
- There are two main types of diabetes:

Type 1 diabetes (insulin dependent)	Type 2 diabetes (non insulin dependent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounts for 10% of all diabetes cases in Australia<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Can occur at any age, though usually before 40 years<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accounts for 85% of all diabetes cases<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• More common in adults over 45 but is increasingly occurring earlier in life<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted by the lack of insulin in the body, as a result of the destruction of insulin producing cells in the pancreas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted by the lack of insulin production or the body's inability to use insulin effectively (insulin resistance)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caused by a mix of genetic predisposition and environmental factors<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Not caused by lifestyle factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caused by genetic predisposition, age and a variety of modifiable risk factors such as obesity and physical inactivity. Has a strong association with high blood pressure and high blood fats<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires daily insulin therapy for survival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires lifestyle modification and/or medication</li> </ul>

### How common is diabetes?

- Every day in Australia approximately 275 adults develop diabetes<sup>3</sup>
- Almost 1 in 4 Australians over the age of 25 has diabetes or a condition of impaired sugar metabolism – a pre-cursor to diabetes which carries an increased risk of heart disease<sup>1</sup>
- In the 2004-05 National Health Survey, 699,600 Australians were reported as having known diabetes<sup>2</sup>
- However, based on data from the Ausdiab study, it has been estimated that 940,000 Australian adults aged 25 or above had diabetes in the year 1999-2000.<sup>1</sup>
- By 2010, it is estimated that 1.23 million people will have diabetes in Australia<sup>1</sup>

### What are the complications of diabetes?

- Diabetes is a major risk factor for heart disease, kidney failure, blindness, amputations and birth defects<sup>1</sup>
- Diabetes is the most common cause of severe (end-stage) kidney disease<sup>2</sup>
- Diabetes is the most common cause of blindness in people under 60 years of age<sup>3</sup>

- Approximately 75–80% of people with diabetes die of heart disease<sup>4</sup>
- A total of 11,735 deaths in Australia in 2004 were related to diabetes (3,599 deaths where diabetes was an underlying cause and 8,136 where diabetes was an associated cause)<sup>2</sup>

### **How much does diabetes cost Australia?**

- In 2003, diabetes accounted for 5.8% of the total disease burden in Australia<sup>2</sup>
- Diabetes costs Australia over \$6 billion every year<sup>5</sup>
- The disease-attributable cost of diabetes has been projected to increase 3.7-fold by 2051<sup>2</sup>

### **How is diabetes treated in Australia?**

- People with type 1 diabetes require daily insulin injections, usually several times a day<sup>6</sup>
- Many type 2 diabetes patients can achieve a healthy blood glucose level through lifestyle changes such as healthy eating, regular physical activity and weight reduction<sup>7</sup>
- For many patients, lifestyle modification alone does not achieve therapy goals and in many cases medication is required. A proportion of patients with type 2 diabetes will require insulin therapy<sup>6</sup>

### **References**

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6. Use of medicines by Australians with diabetes. AIHW Bulletin - Issue 45. AIHW 2006.
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