

# The Wellness Family

Dr. Chang Keeps You Informed

## Children and Type II Diabetes

There was a time when Diabetes was an “adult problem” that was rarely if ever seen in children; with the most common diagnoses of Type II Diabetes being “adult onset”. That has changed.

In 2001, the increasing number of obese children and youth throughout the United States led policy makers to rank it as a critical public health threat. Since the 1970s, the rate of obesity has more than doubled for preschool children aged 2-5 years and adolescents aged 12-19 years, and it has more than tripled for elementary school children aged 6-11 years. Currently there are over nine million children six years of age or older who are obese.

This increase in the rate of childhood obesity is directly linked to the increase in diagnoses of Type II Diabetes whose major risk factors include obesity, getting little or no physical activity and family history. About 75% of children with Type II Diabetes have a parent or sibling with the disease.

### **What is Type II Diabetes?**

Dr. Lynn Hardy, N.D., the Director for the Global Institute for Alternative Medicine, defines Diabetes as a degenerative metabolic disorder that affects the way our body utilizes the food we eat. Our digestive system breaks down everything we eat into a simple sugar called glucose, which is the main source of fuel for our body. After digestion, the glucose moves into our bloodstream where it can be used by the body's cells for energy; this requires the presence of insulin.

Insulin is a hormone that is produced by the pancreas. When we eat, the pancreas is supposed to produce the right amount of insulin automatically to move the glucose from our blood into our cells. For those suffering from Diabetes, however, the pancreas either produces little or no insulin or the body ignores the presence of the insulin. This results in glucose building up in the blood, overflowing in the urine and passing out of the body. Therefore, the body is losing its main source of fuel despite the fact that the blood contains large amounts of glucose.

Type II Diabetes, specifically, occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin or when the body doesn't use the insulin that was produced effectively. Over 90% of cases of Diabetes are Type II and this increasingly includes children.

### **What are the risks?**

As with any disease there are risks involved in ignoring the problem, and Type II Diabetes is notoriously easy to ignore. Most children don't have symptoms when the disease is first diagnosed, but if there are symptoms they're usually mild and include having to urinate more often, feeling a little more thirsty than normal, and losing a little weight for no clear reason

The risk of ignoring this dangerous disease is that years of poor glucose control can lead to major health complications including the following: kidney disease, visual impairment, even blindness, and nerve damage.



*“One quarter of all cases... could be prevented with 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise alone...”*

For children and teens with this disease, the risks are even greater. There is rising evidence that when Type II Diabetes is acquired at an early age, it progresses aggressively, leading to early complications. Public health experts warn that children diagnosed with Type II Diabetes in their early teens may suffer from severe Diabetes related health problems such as renal failure and cardiovascular disease by the time they are 30.

### **What causes Type II Diabetes?**

The most common cause of Type II Diabetes is obesity, which has been directly linked to a sedentary lifestyle. Dr. Andrew Weil says, “An estimated one quarter of all cases of Type II Diabetes could be prevented with 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity alone.” Regular exercise helps control weight, stabilizes blood sugar levels and decreases insulin resistance.

Yet, a lack of exercise is not the only contributing factor to obesity; diet plays a major role as well. Michael Murray, N.D. and Joseph Pizemo, N.D. noted in the

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Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine that even in healthy individuals sudden significant weight gain will result in “carbohydrate intolerance, higher insulin levels, and insulin insensitivity in fat and muscle tissue”. They further note that it’s the progressive development of insulin resistance that is believed to be the underlying factor in the development of Type II Diabetes. “Weight loss alone can correct these abnormalities and either significantly improves diabetes or totally resolves it.”

### **What are the common treatments?**

A pediatrician will typically want to treat Type II Diabetes with one of five drugs currently being used to control glucose levels. These include Biguanides, Sulfonylureas, Meglitinide, Glucosidase inhibitors, and Thiazolidenediones. It should be noted that efficacy and safety data for these chemicals are not available for children; nor are any of these drugs FDA approved for use in children. Additionally, it’s been determined that these substances are only effective in 40% of cases, and then, typically for only about three months. Pharmaceuticals may not be the answer.

Dr. Michael Berger, M.S. Professor of Medicine at Dusseldorf University in Germany, says that the use of drugs has become the treatment of laziness, “Both on the part of the physician and the patient”. It’s easier to just write a prescription and give the child a pill than to educate parents on the importance of a healthy diet and the wellness lifestyle.

### **What is best?**

Type II Diabetes is a lifelong disease, but it can be controlled and, in some cases, completely reversed. The most important things to consider are the contributing factors.

Obesity is the major contributor to childhood Type II Diabetes, and the cure for obesity is diet and exercise. When attempting to adopt a wellness lifestyle there are a few things to remember:

- The lifestyle of the entire family should change – even if there’s only one child suffering from this disease, the entire family will benefit
- Use smaller plates for meals – smaller plates mean smaller portions, which means less caloric intake
- Better foods – 2/3 of your child’s plate should be vegetables and the other 1/3 should be a mix of fruits, proteins and whole grains
- When in doubt, don’t eat white – potatoes, white rice, white bread, etc.
- If it’s wrapped in plastic or a box it’s processed – avoid these items
- Find ways to keep your child active – in most cases, just 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity can reverse Type II Diabetes
  - In warmer climates, consider walking or biking, go to the park, play catch, etc.
  - In colder climates, find a family friendly gym where there are children’s fitness programs, climbing walls, or ways for the entire family to workout together, utilize an indoor swimming facility or consider going to the mall and walking non-stop, etc.

### **In Summary**

It’s important to know that a diagnosis of Type II Diabetes does not mean a guaranteed future of complications and health risks. The reality is, with moderate changes to your family’s diet and exercise routine, your child can overcome this disease and live a long and healthy life.

For more information visit:

[www.byregion.net/articles-healers/Diabetes\\_Alternatives.html](http://www.byregion.net/articles-healers/Diabetes_Alternatives.html)  
[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

*Dear Parent,*

*Dr. Chang is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. Take a moment today to ask your Family Wellness Chiropractor any questions you may have regarding your family’s overall health and wellness.*

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