



Living Well with AIMGA

VOL. 11 - DIABETES

Compiled by AIMGA's Health and Wellness Team

**HEALTHHUB FOR
NEWCOMERS**



Health Matters! Wellness Matters! Diversity Matters!

- IN THIS ISSUE
- INTRODUCTION
- HOT TOPIC
- DID YOU KNOW?
- HEALTH REMINDERS
- RED FLAGS
- MYTH OR FACT?
- COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONS
- IMG SPOTLIGHT
- OTHER AWARENESS DAYS

NOVEMBER: Diabetes



Diabetes is a chronic health condition that affects how the body transforms food into energy. Globally, one in ten adults have diabetes (90% with Type 2), and close to half of these cases are not yet diagnosed. November 14th marks World Diabetes Day, which is a campaign that promotes diabetes advocacy efforts and the importance of taking actions to confront diabetes as a global health crisis. The theme for World Diabetes Day 2023 is Access to Diabetes Care, with a focus on delaying or preventing type 2 diabetes and diabetes-related complications, with the slogan “Know your risk, Know your response.” Knowing your risk and what to do is important to help with prevention. Do your part and read more about diabetes prevention and treatment through Volume 11 of the LWWA newsletter!

Sources: [CDC, 2023](#); [International Diabetes Federation, 2023](#); [World Health Organization, 2023](#)



Getting Started: Tips & Resources



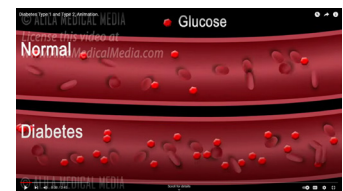
- **IDF School of Diabetes** has developed a new [online education platform](#) for understanding diabetes, including courses, modules, and videos
- **World Diabetes Day** [resources](#) and [global activities/initiatives](#)



Ted Talk: [The Surprising Lesson Diabetes Taught Me](#)



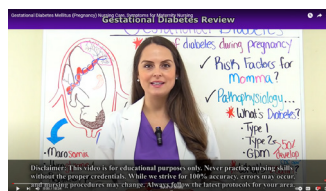
[Understanding Type 2 Diabetes](#)



[Diabetes Type 1 and Type 2 Animation](#)



[What Is Type 1 Diabetes?](#)



[Gestational Diabetes Mellitus](#)



[What is Prediabetes?](#)

HOT TOPIC:

Keeping in the Know With Gestational Diabetes



Gestational diabetes, also known as gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), is a temporary form of diabetes that occurs during pregnancy. The risk of developing GDM in pregnancy is about 3-20% and this increases the risk of developing diabetes later in life for both mother and child. Similar to other types of diabetes, GDM affects how your cells use sugar, or glucose; it causes high blood sugar that can affect pregnancy and the baby's health.

Living a healthy lifestyle, including diet and exercise are some ways to help reduce the risk of developing GDM. See the risk factors for GDM here and if you are concerned about potentially developing this condition, consult your doctor.

The screening for gestational diabetes is typically done between the 24th and 28th week of pregnancy. In some cases, screening might be done earlier in the prenatal care. This may be the case for women over the age of 30, women with a family history of diabetes, or women who have experienced a stillbirth or had GDM in a previous pregnancy.

During pregnancy you can help control your GDM by eating healthy foods, exercising and, if necessary, taking medication. Controlling blood glucose can keep you and your baby healthy and prevent a difficult delivery.

It is important to note that certain complications can occur with GDM. These are not limited to: difficult delivery or cesarean section due to baby's size; prematurity; low blood sugar; preeclampsia; or abnormal sugar level in baby. If you have gestational diabetes during pregnancy, generally your blood sugar returns to its usual level soon after delivery. However, if you've had GDM, you have a higher risk of getting Type 2 diabetes (50% increased risk). That said, it is important to get tested for changes in blood sugar more frequently.

If you are thinking about getting pregnant, consult your family doctor to check your risk of GDM, along with your overall health and wellness. This can help make sure your pregnancy goes smoothly and as safely as possible to protect both you and your future baby.

Sources: [CDC, 2022](#) ; [Diabetes Canada, 2023](#); [Mayo Clinic, 2023](#)



HEALTH REMINDERS!



- Though there is no cure for diabetes, research shows that managing your diabetes through medication, [diet](#), and exercise can help you avoid additional health complications or worsening of symptoms. Try out these habits today to maintain a positive and healthy lifestyle:
- Visit your dentist regularly and take care of your teeth and gums by brushing, flossing, and using antiseptic mouthwash to prevent gum disease and tooth loss.
- To prevent kidney failure, which can result from diabetes, there are drugs available that can lower blood sugars and blood pressure. Maintaining this can [cut your risk](#) of kidney failure by over 30%!
- Make sure to get regular eye exams from a local optometrist, as timely treatment of issues can prevent up to 90% of diabetes-related blindness. Consult your optometrist if you notice warning signs in your vision, including blurriness.
- Drew Harrisberg, a diabetic himself, highlights [The Five Pillars](#), which he encourages embodying to achieve a “balanced daily dose so that you can live your best life.” These pillars include exercise, nutrition, daily living, mindfulness, and insulin and blood glucose control. Watch his TedTalk [here](#).
- Good day-to-day [prevention](#) can prevent a diabetic coma. It is also important for diabetics to wear a medical identification bracelet or necklace in case of an emergency to let others know of your condition.

DID YOU KNOW?



- [Type 1 diabetes](#) often appears suddenly. In children, Type 1 diabetes symptoms may be similar to the flu sometimes. Children with Type 1 diabetes must have multiple daily injections of insulin to keep the blood glucose level within normal ranges.
- Although Type 2 diabetes is [most common](#) in middle-aged and older people, you can develop type 2 diabetes as a child, teen or adult.
- According to [Diabetes Canada](#), 57% of Canadians reported not being able to adhere to prescribed treatment because of the high cost of medications, devices and suppliers not covered by a health plan.
- Having gestational diabetes means more frequent appointments for [non-stress testing](#), and we recommend you do fetal kick counts at home to make sure your baby is moving normally. It is recommended that you also get detailed ultrasounds to monitor healthy fetal growth.
- If you have gestational diabetes, your baby is at higher risk of developing [type 2 diabetes](#) later in life. Therefore, along with mother, baby also needs regular monitoring.
- [Anxiety and depression](#) are more common among people with diabetes than in the general population. It is important to seek mental health care to address these conditions. Talking to a physician or diabetes educator is a good first step. People can also find emotional support through diabetes support groups in their communities or online.

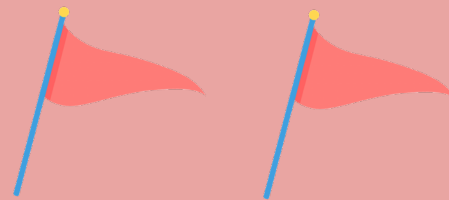


RED FLAGS

- 1 If you experience the following **warning signs** or [symptoms](#), please check in with your doctor and get your blood sugar tested: frequent urination, extreme hunger or thirst, more infections than normal, blurry vision, weight changes, feeling very tired, frequent or recurring infections, or slow healing cuts and bruises.
- 2 Currently, [11 million Canadians](#) are living with diabetes or prediabetes. Untreated or unmanaged prediabetes (reflected by warning signs above) can lead to type 2 diabetes.
- 3 **Prediabetes** causes and [risk factors](#) include: age 45+; overweight or obese; eating a lot of red and processed meat; drinking sugary beverages; not eating fruit, vegetables, nuts, or whole grains; Black, Native American, Latino, or Pacific Islander descent; have high cholesterol, sedentary behaviour, sleep disturbances (e.g., sleep apnea), and polycystic ovary syndrome.
- 4 **Gestational Diabetes** [risk factors](#) can be described as **MOMMA** – **M**aternal (over aged 25), **O**verweight or obese, **M**acrosomia (previous large baby), **M**ultiple Pregnancies, **A** history of diabetes in the family.
- 5 Diabetes can take a toll on nearly [every part](#) of your body, including your heart and blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, nerves, gastrointestinal tract, gums and teeth.
 - **Heart disease and blood vessel disease** are common problems for many people who don't have their diabetes managed properly. These

people are at least 2x as likely to have heart problems and strokes as the average person.

- Diabetes is the leading cause of **new vision loss** among adults ages 20 to 74. It can lead to eye problems, some of which can cause blindness if not treated. These include cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy. Consult your doctor if you are experiencing vision changes.
 - Diabetes is one of the leading causes of **kidney failure** in adults, and one usually doesn't notice symptoms of early diabetes-related kidney disease until later stages. Consult your doctor if your feet and legs are swelling.
 - Having diabetes puts you at higher risk for **gum disease**. Consult your doctor if your gums are red and swollen and bleed easily.
- 6 If one goes into a **diabetic coma**, they're alive but they can't wake up or respond purposefully to sights, sounds or other types of stimulation. A diabetic coma is a medical emergency. If you have symptoms of high or low blood sugar and you feel like you may pass out, call 911.



MYTH OR FACT?

Sources: *ICAHN School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, 2023; Henigsmann, 2023; American Diabetes Association, 2023; MedlinePlus, 2023; Sinai Health, 2018*

Click on each myth bubble to find out true, evidence-based information.

If you have Type 2 diabetes and your doctor says you need to start using insulin, it means you're failing to take care of your diabetes properly.

I will not get diabetes because my parents do not have it.

People with diabetes need to eat special foods.

People with diabetes are more likely to get colds and other illnesses.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES & ORGANIZATIONS

- **World Diabetes Foundation (WDF):** stands at the forefront of funding initiatives for diabetes prevention and healthcare projects in low- and middle-income nations.
- **Diabetes Canada:** improving the lives of Canadians affected by diabetes, including meal planning.
- **International Diabetes Federation (IDF):** promotes diabetes care, prevention, and a cure worldwide. They also offer valuable resources and information on diabetes management.
- **Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF):** JDRF is a leading global organization dedicated to funding research to find a cure for type 1 diabetes.
- **World Diabetes Day (WDD):** international campaign led by the IDF to raise awareness about diabetes where they host events and provide resources to engage the global community.
- **National Aboriginal Diabetes Association (NADA):** They offer culturally sensitive resources and support. National Indigenous Diabetes Association – The National Indigenous Diabetes Association envisions diabetes-free healthy communities
- **Challenge Diabetes** nurtures a community of individuals living with Type 1 Diabetes. Through hands-on learning and adventures, they empower one another with the skills and self-assurance needed to conquer daily hurdles and redefine their potential achievements.
- **Diabetes Educator Section** - Alberta Diabetes Institute: a research center committed to converting findings in scientific discovery into healthcare innovations for diabetes prevention, management, and a potential cure.



IMG SPOTLIGHT



Atobrhan Godlu

Atobrhan Godlu is a General Practitioner from Eritrea. Atobrhan works for Alberta Health Services (AHS), University of Calgary (UofC), and the Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA). His education and training in health care began when he completed his Bachelor of Medicine in 2013 in Eritrea. However, Atobrhan has continued to develop his education and training here in Canada, working for AHS as an Admin V and Surgical Processor since 2017.

Atobrhan hold a master's degree in health services management from the University of Lethbridge. In the same year, he completed the Patient and Community Engagement Research (PaCER) program offered through the UoC Continuing Education. He explored understanding the experiences of virtual care of diabetic adults in Alberta during the Covid-19 pandemic. Atobrhan has also been an active member of the Health and Wellness Team with AIMGA since 2021, where he volunteered and worked with immigrants and new-comer communities.

Skills gained from AIMGA:

AIMGA's dedication and commitment to their mission has had a tremendous impact on my life. AIMGA has given me many volunteer opportunities, professional and employment advice through study groups, and led me to the PaCER program which gave me a plethora of research experience. I have learned more about vaccine navigation through my current role with AIMGA, where I've had the pleasure to work in community to increase vaccine awareness and uptake amongst newcomer populations. I work with dedicated AIMGA staff whose compassion and commitment shine through in every action they take.

Biggest Lesson Learned & Advice for Other IMGs:

The importance of resilience is key. Life is full of challenges, setbacks, and unexpected obstacles. It is crucial to develop the ability to bounce back from failures and keep moving forward. I have learned fearing failure will not help you; see it as a steppingstone to success. Learn from your mistakes and use them as an opportunity for growth. Never stop learning. Acquire new skills, stay updated with trends, and seek knowledge or opportunities in the areas that interest you. You will never know how one small opportunity might impact your future. Lastly, build and maintain a strong professional network because relationships are the key to opportunity and success here in Canada.

Remember, the path to success is unique to everyone. What works for one person might not work for others, so find your own path and get going on your journey!

OTHER AWARENESS DAYS



STOMACH CANCER AWARENESS DAY (November 30)

Purpose:

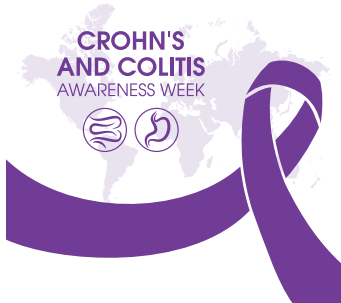
To spread awareness and increase education regarding stomach and gastric cancer, to promote effective prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Key Facts:

- About 4000 people are diagnosed with stomach cancer in Canada on a yearly basis
- Risk factors for this cancer relate to age (older adults), gender (males), and ethnicity (people of African descent are more susceptible).
- Certain [behaviours](#) affect your risk of developing stomach cancer.
- Click here for the [signs and symptoms](#) of stomach cancer.

Additional Links:

Canadian Cancer Society – [What is stomach cancer?](#); John Hopkins Centre – [Overview, causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment; How Endoscopy detects stomach cancer](#);
Canadian Society of Intestinal Research – [Prevention](#)



CROHN'S AND COLITIS AWARENESS MONTH

Purpose:

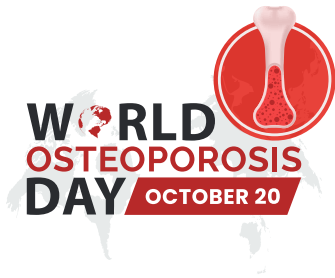
A chance for Canadians to understand a little more about what it is like to live with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, collectively known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

Key Facts:

- Canada has one of the highest rates of IBD in the world. Currently, over 300,000 Canadians have IBD, and this number is expected to grow to 400,000 by 2030.
- Please click [here](#) for the signs and symptoms of IBD.
- Both are lifelong diseases and people can experience acute periods of active symptoms (active disease or flare) followed by periods of no or very mild symptoms (remission).

Additional Links:

Johns Hopkins Centre: [What is IBD?](#); Crohn's and Colitis Canada: [Are You At Risk?](#)



FALL PREVENTION & OSTEOPOROSIS MONTH

Purpose:

Fall Prevention Month was launched in 2015 to raise awareness about the prevention of falls and fall-related injuries in children and older adults. Osteoporosis Canada has launched a new awareness campaign this November for Osteoporosis Month: “Break Myths. Not Bones” in hopes of educating people across the country about the disease and to take action to reduce their risk of breaking a bone.

Key Facts:

- In Canada, falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations among older adults. Around 20-30% of older adults fall each year.
- Falls also are the leading cause for hospital admissions from injuries for children ages 0 – 14.
- Osteoporosis is a bone disease that develops when deteriorates over several years without any signs or symptoms, until a bone breaks; it is known as the “SILENT THIEF”
- In Canada, osteoporosis is most common among those who are age 50+. 2.3 million Canadians are affected by osteoporosis, and at least 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men will suffer from an osteoporotic fracture during their lifetime.
- Most falls are predictable and preventable. Click [here](#) to learn more about what makes you more likely to fall AND what you can do to prevent falls.

Additional Links:

Osteoporosis Canada: [How good is your bone health? Know your risk Quiz!](#); Cleveland Clinic: [Overview, Symptoms and Causes, Diagnosis, Management and Treatment, Prevention](#)



WORLD PREMATURETY DAY (November 17th)

Purpose:

To help recognize the challenges and burden of preterm birth on the affected individuals and their families worldwide.

Key Facts:

- The average pregnancy lasts for approximately 37 to 42 weeks. Every baby born before the 37th week of pregnancy is considered as preterm.
- In Canada, 30000 babies are born premature each year, however, the cause of 70% of preterm births remains unknown.
- Premature birth can have serious health consequences at birth and later in life. Preterm birth accounts for nearly 2/3 infant deaths in Canada and is associated with increased risk for numerous short- and long- term health problems. In addition to these health effects, preterm births may also take an emotional toll and be a financial burden for families.

Additional Links:

Mayo Clinic: [Read more about preterm birth, Risk factors, Complications and Prevention](#)

A special thanks goes out to the following international medical graduates: **Oluwadamilola (Dami) Jaiyeola, Lateefat Hammed Imam, Eno Chude, Atobrhan Godlu, Naima Sultana, Jasleen Ratti, Aisha Ashraf, and Marleen Polus** for their additional contributions.

AIMGA



**AIMGA
CALGARY**



Crescent Centre
Suite 202
1409 Edmonton Trail NE
Calgary, AB T2E 3K8



403.520.7730



www.aimga.ca