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## Like a thief in the night, type-2 diabetes silently snatches health



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### A silent disease

Type-2 diabetes is sometimes called a “silent” disease because in the early stages, symptoms may go unnoticed or dismissed as a nuisance – until the disease progresses and takes a toll on health.

The disease is characterized by high levels of sugar in the blood, which can cause a host of serious health complications. The sometimes-slow progression usually starts by damaging small blood vessels and nerves, leading to diseases of the eyes, kidneys, and nerves. It may also affect blood circulation, causing problems in the legs and feet.

Left unmanaged, the disease can affect larger blood vessels leading to heart attacks and strokes because diabetes can cause coronary arteries to become inflamed, narrowed, or obstructed.

### Early warnings:

- **Thirst:** One of the first symptoms of type-2 diabetes is typically an increase in thirst. This is often accompanied by a dry mouth, increased appetite, unusually frequent urination, and strange weight fluctuations.
- **Headaches:** As blood sugar levels become abnormal, additional symptoms may include headaches, blurred vision, and unexplained fatigue.
- **Infections:** Infections, cuts, or sores are slow to heal, especially in the legs and feet where circulation has been impeded.

### Lifestyle risk factors you can control:

- Being overweight
- Leading a sedentary lifestyle
- Unhealthy eating habits high in fats and sodium
- Unmanaged high blood pressure
- Using tobacco in any form

### Risk factors you can't control:

- **Race or ethnicity:** Hispanics, African-Americans, Native Americans, and Asians have a higher than average risk.
- **Family history:** Having a parent or sibling with diabetes boosts your risk.
- **Age:** Being 45 and older increases your risk.

The more risk factors you have, the greater your odds of developing type-2 diabetes.

### Diagnosing diabetes

A simple blood test is all that's required. Talk to your doctor about being screened for diabetes. The sooner you find out, the better. And remember, lifestyle changes and medication can help prevent or slow progression of the disease.