

# DIABETES

## Backgrounder

- There are two types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. Both are characterized by elevated blood sugar levels due to an insufficiency of insulin, a hormone that regulates blood glucose levels.
- Type 1 diabetes, formerly called insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) or juvenile-onset diabetes, occurs when the body produces little or no insulin at all and accounts for only five to ten per cent of all diagnosed cases.
- Type 2 diabetes, formerly called adult-onset diabetes or non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM), is more common and occurs when the body is unable to produce enough, or properly use insulin. It is diagnosed later in life, usually after age 40 (Health Canada-National Statistics-Diabetes in Canada), and accounts for about 90 to 95 per cent (Health Canada website-National Statistics-Diabetes in Canada) of all diagnosed cases<sup>1</sup>.
- Approximately 6 per cent of Canadians, more than 2 million people, have been diagnosed with diabetes and another 5 per cent of Canadian adults may currently have undiagnosed diabetes<sup>2</sup>.
- In Canada, it is estimated that at least \$9 billion (\$US) is spent annually on treating people with diabetes and its complications<sup>3</sup>
- Risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes include:
  - Obesity (however, even modest weight gain increases the risk)
  - Family history of diabetes
  - Low HDL cholesterol or high triglycerides
  - Increasing age (age 45 or older)
  - Certain ethnic backgrounds
- Diabetes damages small blood vessels throughout the body, and affects the kidneys as well as other organs and tissues.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Diabetes Association Web site <http://www.diabetes.ca>

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Diabetes Association Web site <http://www.diabetes.ca>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.diabetes.ca> and <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo01.htm>