

What is Diabetes?

Submitted by the Genesee County Health Department

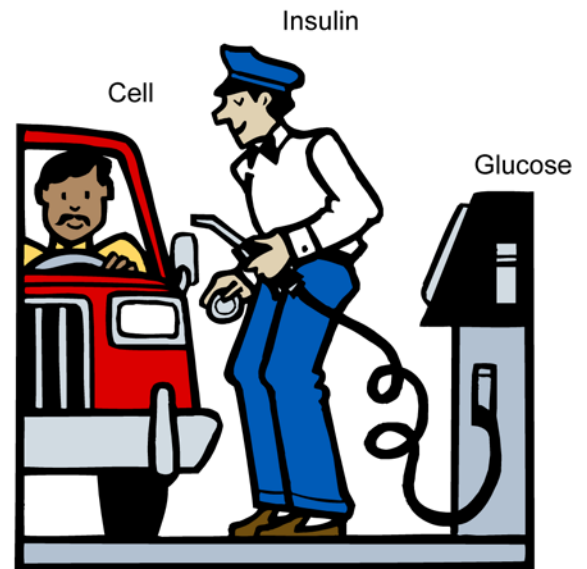
Diabetes is a disorder that affects the way your body uses food for energy and growth.

When you DON'T have diabetes: Your body changes the food you eat into a form of sugar called glucose. Your body uses the glucose for fuel so you can do things like reading, walking, working, etc.



The sugar or glucose is carried to the cells in your body through blood vessels so that the glucose can be made into energy or fuel for your body.

The fuel cannot get into your body's fuel tank by itself. It needs some help from a hormone called insulin. Insulin helps glucose (fuel) get to the right places in your body so you have the energy you need, much like a car that needs gas. Gas cannot get into your car unless you pump some in. Likewise, glucose cannot get into the cells of your body unless you have insulin to help put it in.



When you HAVE diabetes, something goes wrong with this process.

Your body does not make enough insulin

or

Your body does not use insulin the right way

If there is not enough insulin, glucose does not get into the cells of your body and it builds up in the blood vessels. When there is too much glucose in the blood it will overflow into the urine and pass out of your body causing you to lose your body's main source of fuel. High levels of glucose in the blood or urine are main signs of diabetes.

Symptoms of diabetes include:

- ✓ increased thirst and urination
- ✓ constant hunger
- ✓ weight loss
- ✓ blurred vision
- ✓ extreme fatigue

