

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You - and Your Health *Understand Risk Factors and Prevention Tips for Diabetes*

In one visit to the doctor, Assurant employee Gina Lane's life was changed forever.

"I had gone to the doctor for tingling in my legs, dizziness and fatigue before, but I wasn't diagnosed until several years later when I got physicals for all my kids and myself," Lane said.

At age 35, Lane learned she had diabetes. Fifteen years later, Lane says, "It's a lifetime fight."

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the U.S. and 29 million Americans suffer from the disease. Of that number, approximately eight million children and adults are not even aware they are diabetic, making them vulnerable to heart disease, blindness, kidney disease, stroke, amputation and death, according to the [American Diabetes Association](#). And a staggering 86 million, or one in three adults, are prediabetic. Of those, nine out of 10 people do not realize they have the condition, according to the [Centers for Disease Control](#).

Lane believes she too was undiagnosed until she went for a thorough exam that included a blood sugar test.

"I hadn't had a physical like that before. I actually was getting impatient with how long the doctor was taking, but thank God she did," she said.

Many individuals aren't diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes until [seven to 10 years after developing the disease](#). To increase awareness about this risk, the Diabetes Association is kicking off a four-week national campaign beginning March 24 that urges people to take its [Diabetes Risk Test](#).

The Diabetes Risk Test assesses factors such as weight, age, family history and race, and is available year-round. People who are overweight, middle-aged or older or have a family history of the disease are at greater risk, as are individuals of African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Asian American or Pacific Island descent.

Lane points out, however, that diabetes can impact anyone. "I know slim people who have diabetes. Everybody is different."

But there are some common steps everyone can take to help combat the deadly disease. Becoming more physically active, such as walking 30 minutes daily, combined with making good food choices, can help prevent diabetes. The American Diabetes Association recommends making one lifestyle change at a time to avoid becoming overwhelmed and becoming tempted to quit.

"We need to keep it moving," said Lane, who walks regularly. "If I'm feeling bad, it's because I didn't make the right decision. I now know the right foods and right portions. When you get out of control, you need to step back and regroup again."



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