

# *Why do people get diabetes?*

We don't always know why people develop diabetes. We do know that there are aspects of a person's health, called risk factors, that are associated with diabetes. Health care providers are trained to discuss these risk factors with you and work with you to identify ways to help you live well with diabetes.



## *Diabetes is not your fault.*

Some risk factors are within your control, while others are not. This can make managing diabetes challenging at times, but it is not impossible. Be kind to yourself as you learn how to care for your diabetes.

Some risk factors include:

- Having a family history of diabetes
- Having a higher body weight
- Not getting enough physical activity
- Dietary factors (what and when you eat and drink)
- Being age 45 or older, however, children can also be diagnosed with diabetes
- Having polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- Being pregnant (gestational diabetes)
- Having high blood pressure

Community Health workers support people in their home communities to live well with diabetes. Learn about Community Health Workers (CHW) here:



SLFNHA CHW Diabetes Program  
Email: [chwdiabetes@slfnha.com](mailto:chwdiabetes@slfnha.com)

Learn more about diabetes here:



For more information, contact [ACWinfo@slfnha.com](mailto:ACWinfo@slfnha.com)

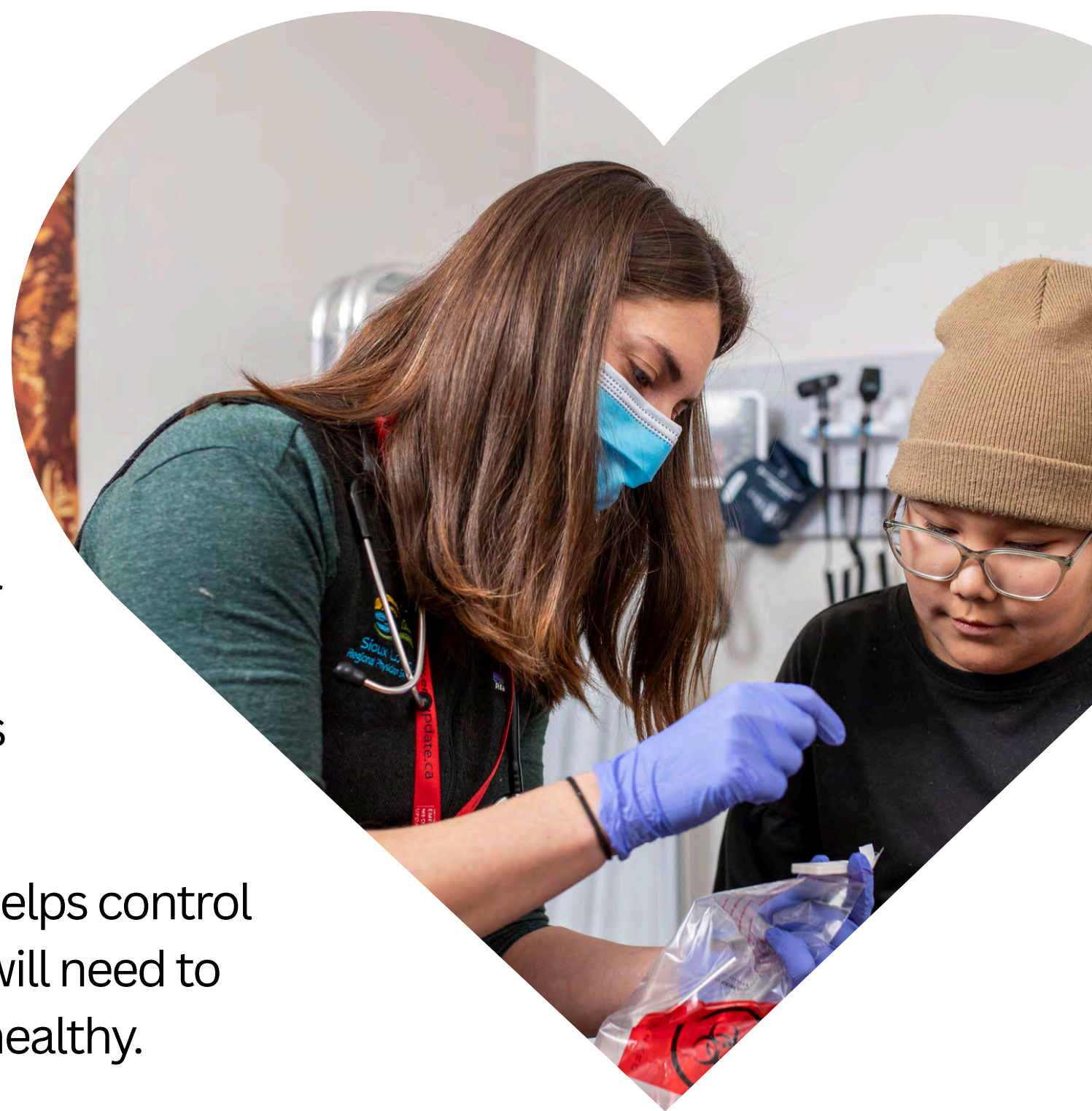


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# *What is diabetes?*

Diabetes is a chronic disease (sickness) where our body has trouble using carbohydrates (sugar and starchy foods). Diabetes causes high and dangerously low blood sugar levels, which harms our bodies over time.

Insulin is a hormone made in our pancreas that helps control the amount of sugar in our blood. Some people will need to use insulin as a medication to keep their bodies healthy.



## *There are 3 different types of diabetes:*

Type 1: Happens when the body doesn't produce any insulin, leading to high blood sugar. Type 1 is more common in children and youth.

Type 2: Happens when the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin or the body can't use it effectively, causing high blood sugar levels. Type 2 is more common in adults, but is becoming more common in children.

Gestational: Happens during pregnancy and usually goes away after childbirth, but it can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes later in life. If you are pregnant, it is important to go to all of your prenatal appointments.

Living with any type of diabetes that is unmanaged or untreated causes serious health problems.

Contact SLFNHA's Primary Care Team for foot care, blood sugar (A1C) testing, or to speak with a dietitian by emailing [pctreception@slfnha.com](mailto:pctreception@slfnha.com).

Contact the Community Health Worker Diabetes Program by emailing [chwdiabetes@slfnha.com](mailto:chwdiabetes@slfnha.com).

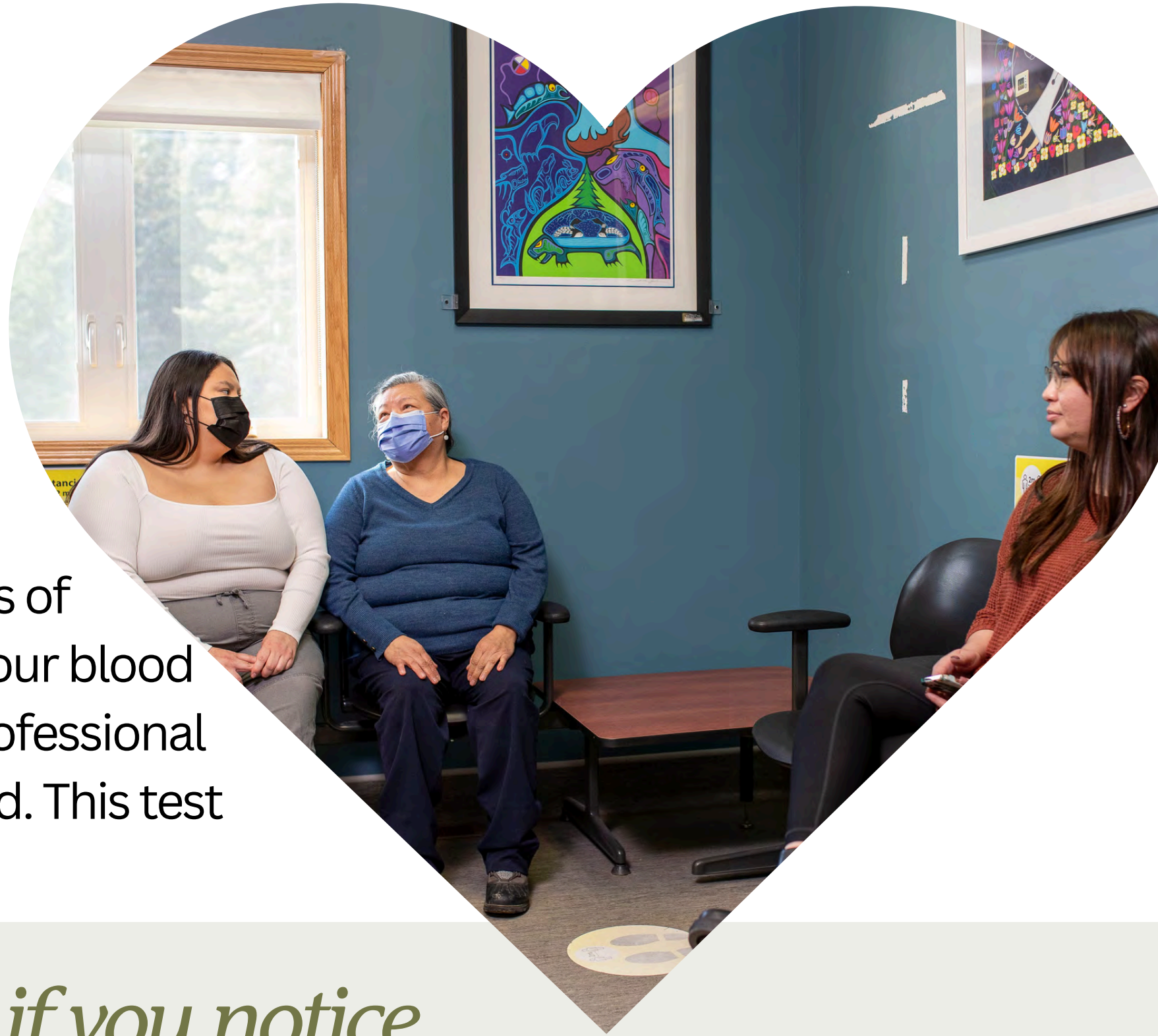
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# Diabetes testing

Sometimes, there are no symptoms of diabetes, and that is why getting your blood sugars checked by a health care professional every 6-12 months is recommended. This test is called an A1C test.



*You should get tested if you notice symptoms like:*

- Needing to pee more often
- Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet
- Wounds that do not heal
- Increased thirst
- Weight loss
- Blurry vision

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# Caring for diabetes

Diabetes doesn't always have symptoms, so it is important to ask your health care provider about testing if you know that it runs in your family, or if you have symptoms. There are severe health impacts of living with untreated and/or unmanaged diabetes.



Untreated or unmanaged diabetes is dangerous and will do damage to your body. Some things that you may experience because of untreated or unmanaged diabetes include:

- Loss of vision
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Pregnancy complications like miscarriage or stillbirth
- Blood vessel damage and tissue damage that could lead to amputation
- Nerve damage
- High blood pressure

Contact your community clinic to speak to a health care provider or community diabetes worker who can answer any questions that you may have. Staying connected to your community health team will help you to live a longer and healthier life.

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# Diabetes prevention

Diabetes affects the whole person. This means that in every area of life, you can work with your body to be at its best.

Exercise and eating food in a balanced way, including foods from the land, can help you to prevent diabetes, or keep it under control without medication.



## *Small steps lead to big changes.*

It is possible to live well with diabetes. Knowledge Keepers in your community may know of teas or plant medicines that are helpful.

Common herbs like cinnamon, ginger, or garlic add flavour and health benefits to your meals.

Check with a licensed health worker when adding plant medicines to your diet. Not all herbs or plants are safe to use during pregnancy.

Contact SLFNHA's Primary Care Team for foot care, blood sugar (A1C) testing, or to speak with a dietitian by emailing [pctreception@slfnha.com](mailto:pctreception@slfnha.com).

For printable resources from the Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle, scan here:



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