

## Diabetes: Are You In Denial?

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**D**iabetes is a sneaky disease. In its initial stages, diabetes is often asymptomatic, often doing some damage before a person knows anything is wrong. And once symptoms such as frequent urination and blurred vision do present themselves, many people have a hard time facing the idea that they have a disease. According to the Center for Disease Control, about 21 million Americans have diabetes, but nearly six million of them don't know it or are in denial. Add to that the astounding 41 million Americans estimated to have pre-diabetes, and there are nearly 50 million Americans in some stage of diabetes.

Every day that goes by without care, the higher the risk for a number of potential fatal diabetes-related conditions, including heart disease. People with type 2 diabetes are four times more likely to have a cardiac event than people who do not have diabetes, and without proper treatment for their diabetes, they tend to have worse outcomes.

Individuals with diabetes often delay care while they struggle with the fact that they've been diagnosed with a chronic condition. Instead of acting immediately to get treatment, individuals often go through:

- Anger, fear, or sadness
- Denial of the real consequences of the disease
- Guilt at not having paid attention to one's health

It is important for patients to understand that diabetes can be a "self-managed" disease. It is one where the patient must take an active role in his or her care. I try to encourage patients to think of a diagnosis of diabetes or pre-diabetes as a "wake-up" call to take better care of their



health. Diabetes is not insurmountable and can be managed with lifestyle modifications such as diet, exercise, appropriate medications, and improved stress coping skills.

For more information about diabetes and pre-diabetes, please visit the American Diabetes Association at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org). To learn more about the National Diabetes Education Program, please visit [www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov).

