

Type 1 diabetes is caused by eating too much sugar, and four other myths about the disease

According to a [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report](#), 34.2 million Americans had diabetes in 2018. Of those, only 1.6 million were Type 1. Because Type 1 diabetes is so much less common, a lot of people have misconceptions about the disease.

**Misconception 1: Only children get diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.**

“The old name was juvenile diabetes,” says Robert Gabbay, chief scientific and medical officer for the [American Diabetes Association](#). “And there are still people who think of it in those terms. But it can develop at any age.”

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**Misconception 3: Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.**

It's true that for Type 2 diabetes, being overweight and inactive are major risk factors, although other factors play a role as well. But one thing we've learned for sure: Neither diet nor exercise play a role in causing Type 1 diabetes.

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**Misconception 4: Diabetics can't have sugar.**

My daughter, who has always had a sweet tooth, was diagnosed just a few days before Christmas. We helpfully bought her armloads of sugar-free candy from the “diabetic” section of the store. But we didn't yet understand that it wasn't just her sugar intake she has to monitor carefully, it was all carbohydrates. Carbohydrates, including sugar, break down into glucose once digested.

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