**What is Type 1 Diabetes?  Click through the slides or watch the video to learn more.**

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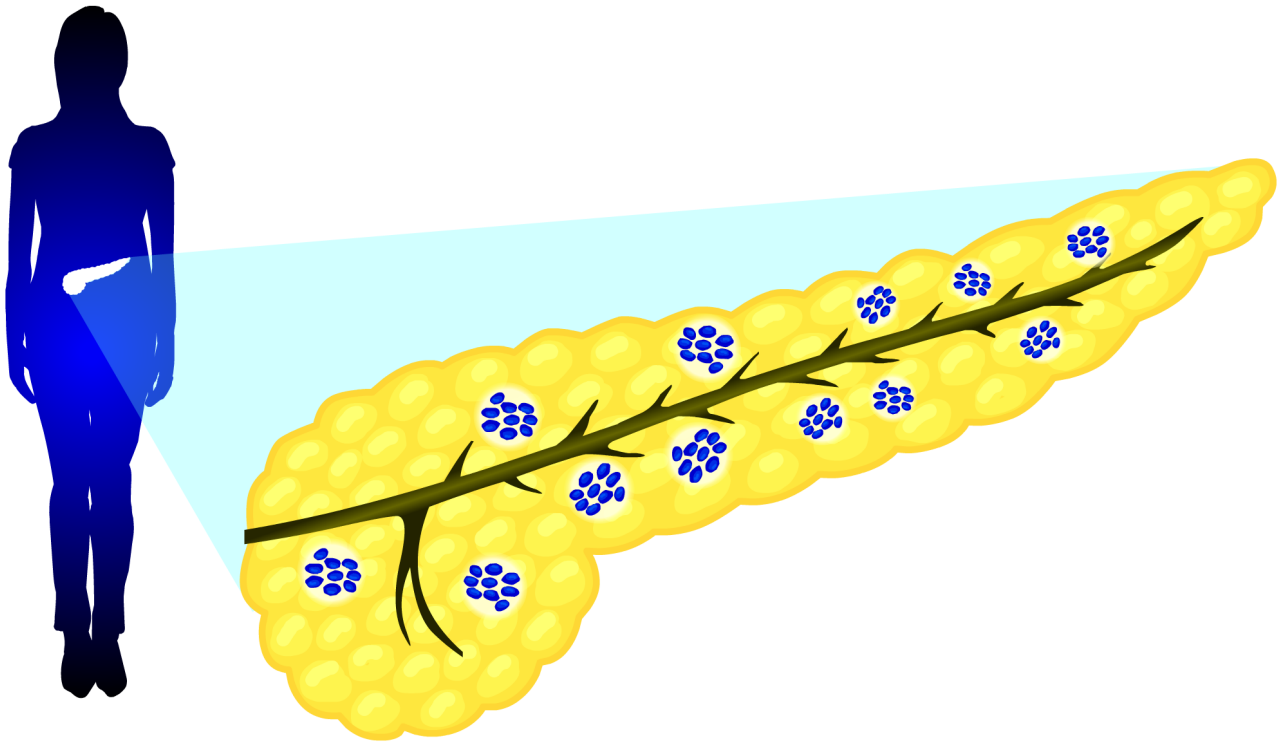
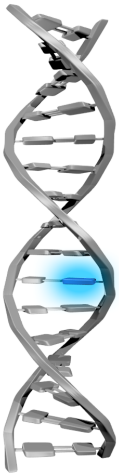
## It's an Autoimmune Condition



Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition where the body’s immune system attacks the islet cells in the pancreas. The islet cells produce a hormone called insulin. Without insulin, glucose rises to dangerous levels in the blood.

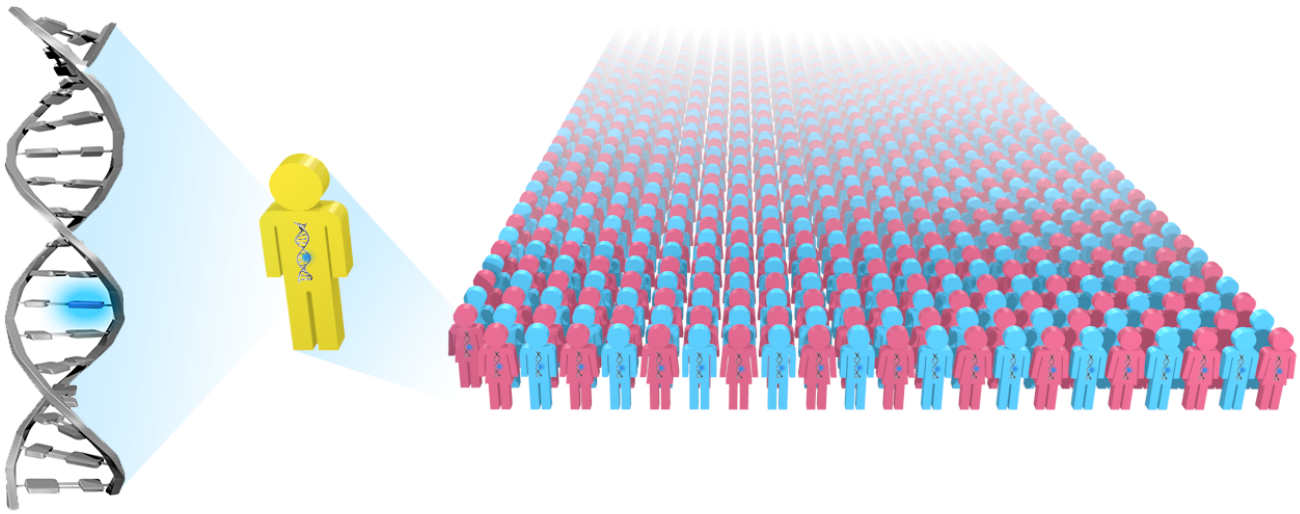
Type 1 diabetes can happen at any age, but it is usually diagnosed in childhood.  This is why it used to be called juvenile diabetes.

## Genes Play a Role



People with type 1 diabetes have a genetic risk to develop the disease.  Scientists have discovered some of the genes that increase the risk.

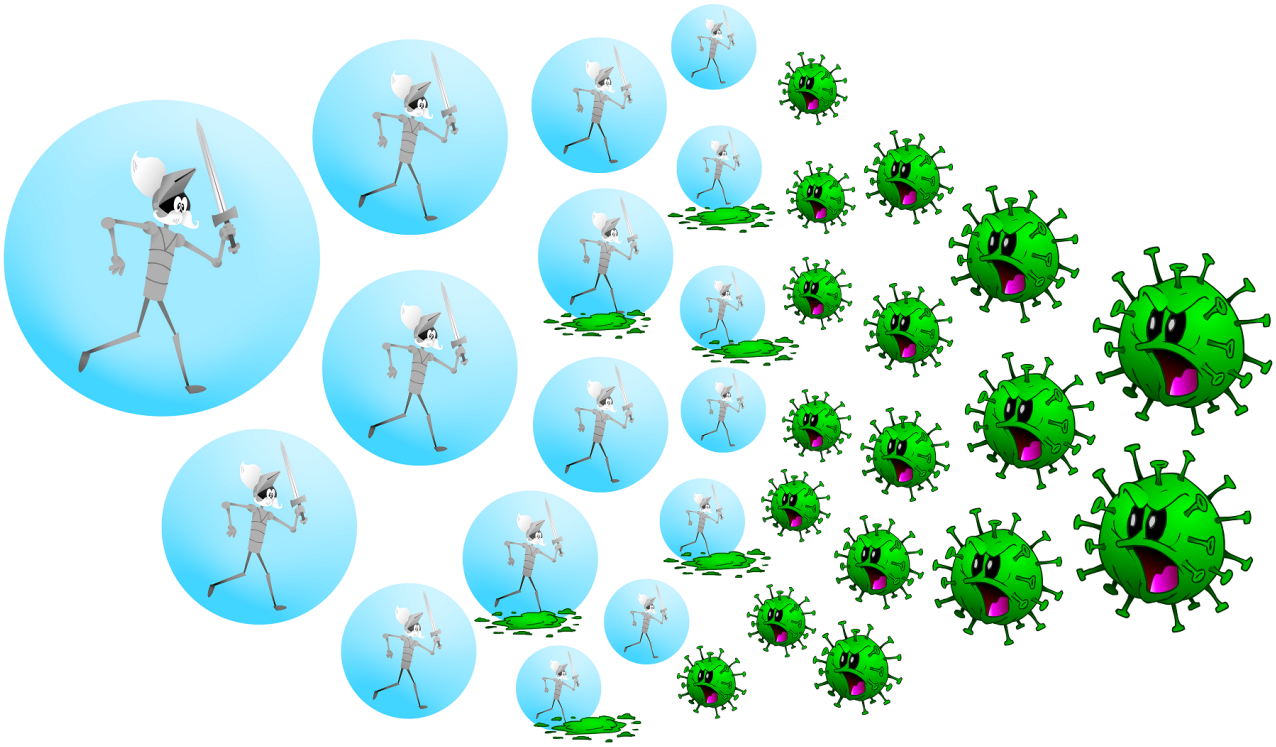
## Very Few People Get It



Most people who have the genetic risk do not develop type 1 diabetes.  In fact, about 85% of people who get type 1 diabetes are the only person in their family who have it.

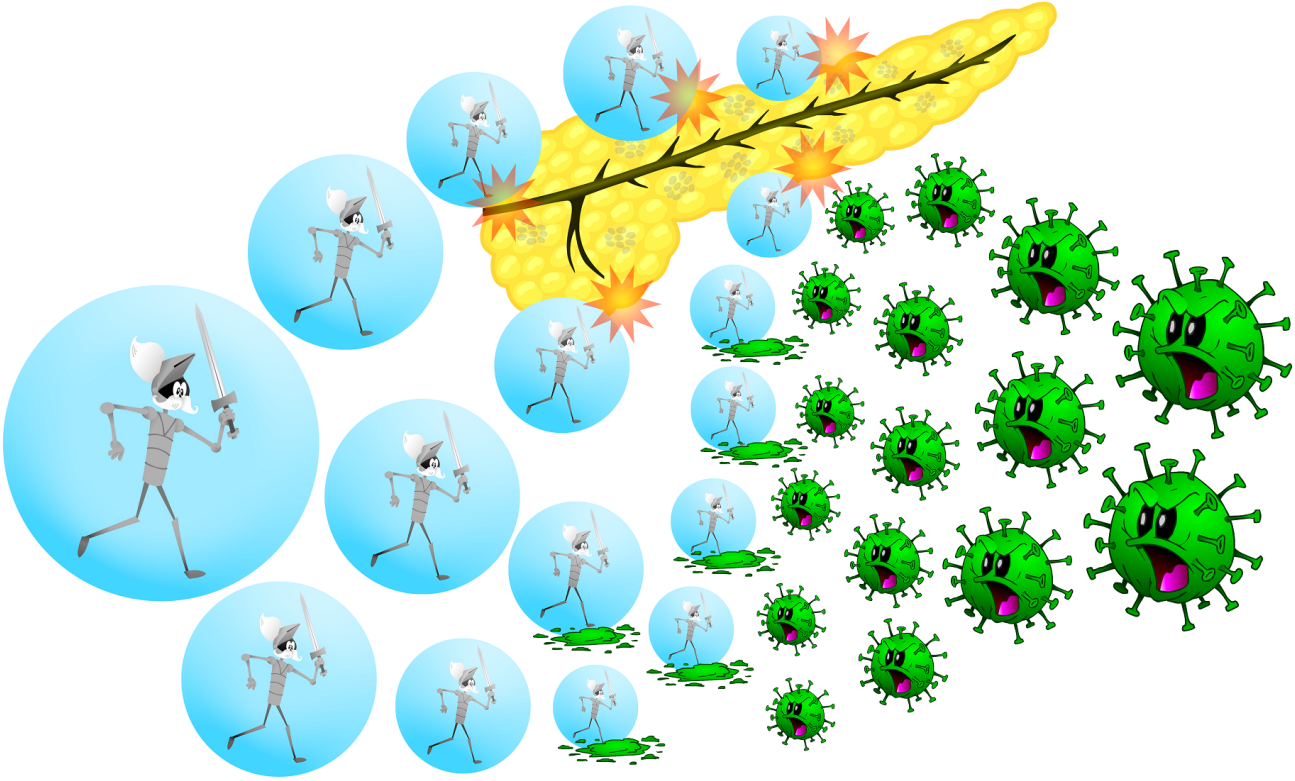
Scientists believe that something in the environment triggers the disease. Research studies like TEDDY will help us understand what the trigger might be.

## How Does It Happen?



The immune system in our body helps to fight infection. When it's working properly, the immune system can tell the difference between invaders, like viruses and bacteria, and the body's own cells.

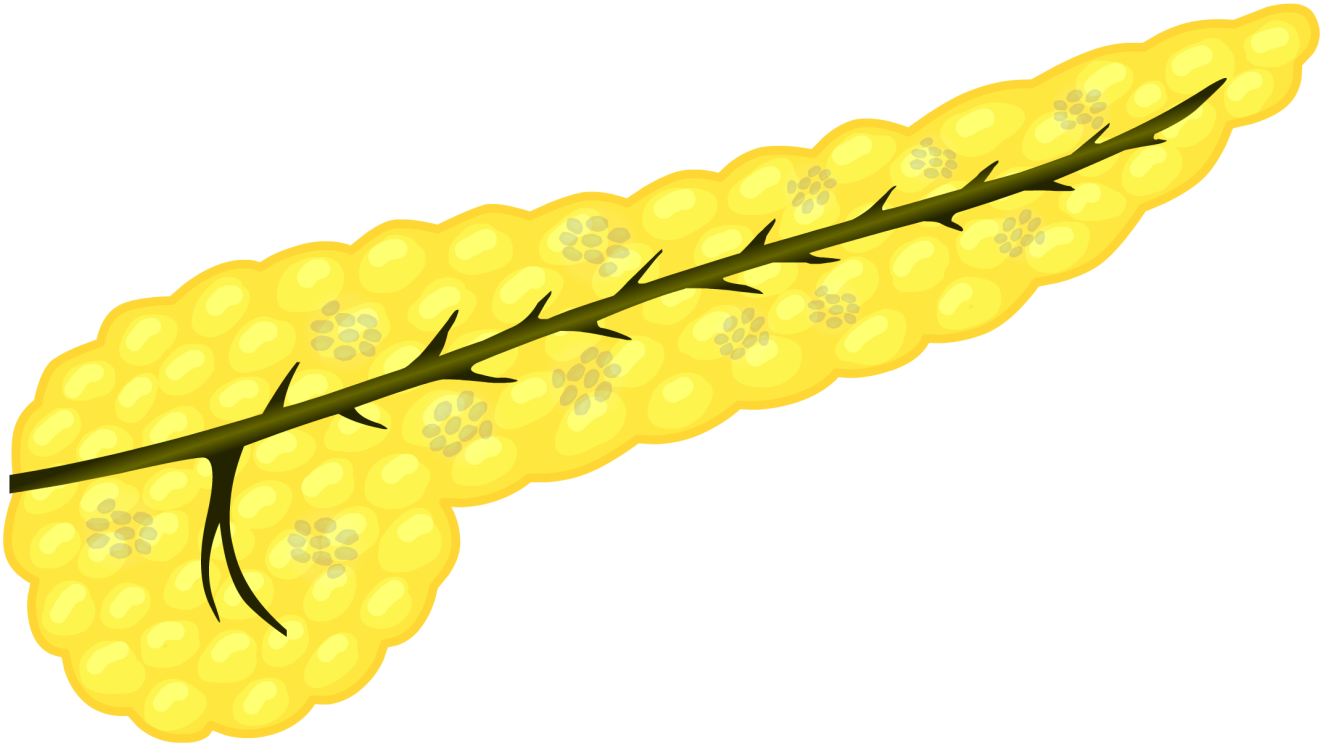
## The Immune System Makes A Mistake



In type 1 diabetes, the immune system makes a mistake and attacks the islet cells in the pancreas that produce insulin.  However, the rest of the pancreas is still working.  Your doctor can confirm this by ordering lab tests to identify blood markers called auto-antibodies.

The islet cells are destroyed in the autoimmune attack. At this time, doctors don’t know how to stop this attack or how to replace the cells that have been destroyed.

## Insulin Stops Being Produced



When enough of the insulin-producing cells are destroyed, the body can no longer make enough insulin.  Glucose levels in the blood rise.  This is when symptoms occur.  These symptoms include having to go to the bathroom frequently, extreme thirst, and hunger.

## Diabetes Can Be Managed

Children and adults diagnosed with type 1 diabetes take insulin by injection or through an insulin pump. With proper management, they can live healthy and happy lives.

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**Recommended**

Type 1 Diabetes vs. Type 2 Diabetes

Understanding Glucose Numbers

The TEDDY Study

Other Kinds of Diabetes

Checking Blood Glucose

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**Sources**

Type 1 Diabetes – CDC

*Diabetes mellitus type 1: Overview (Beyond the Basics)* – UpToDate

*Autoantibodies in type 1 diabetes.* — PubMed

Type 1 Diabetes Trial Net

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Reviewed by Anastasia Albanese-O'Neill, PhD, APRN, CDCES on 11/26/25

*This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.*