

[IMAGE]

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Married couples share many common traits and habits - if one spouse smokes, the other often does; if one exercises, so does the other. Adult-onset diabetes is increasingly being shown to be based on lifestyle factors, rather than genetic ones. By examining married couples - people who are not genetically related but share many similar habits - an association between diabetes and its causes may be found.

A recent study in *Diabetes Care* determined the presence of adult-onset (type 2) diabetes and high blood sugar in the spouses of known diabetics attending a specialized clinic. The 245 spouses in this first group were then compared to 234 spouses of nondiabetic individuals.

People married to diabetics were more than twice as likely to have diabetes and glucose intolerance themselves than spouses of people without diabetes. Spouses of diabetics were also more likely to be obese or overweight and to have high blood pressure than the healthy individuals' spouses - both risk factors for the development of type 2 diabetes.

We've long known that if you have a parent or sibling with diabetes, you are at an increased risk for the condition. This study shows that lifestyle clearly has a significant influence on diabetes risk; the increased odds of sharing diabetes with a family member may be due more to similar habits than to genetics. To avoid developing type 2 diabetes, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, and keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check - and make sure your significant other does the same.

Reference

Khan A, Lasker SS, Chowdhury TA. Are spouses of patients with type 2 diabetes at increased risk of developing diabetes? *Diabetes Care* 2003;26, pp. 710-712.

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