

YOUR DENTIST CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

# It's past time to have a serious talk about type-2 diabetes

By Dr. Gabrielle Cannick

Previously I have discussed the importance of diet in maintaining optimum health — and emphasized the importance of regular dental checkups. Our mouths are an early warning system for potential health problems.

And that leads me to an important discussion. In our dental practice — and throughout the healthcare industry — we are seeing an alarming increase in type 2 diabetes, particularly in children.

Type 2 diabetes sufferers do not process glucose properly. Sugar accumulates in the bloodstream instead of fueling the cells that make up muscles and other tissues. Moving sugar from the bloodstream to the body's cells requires a hormone, insulin, which allows sugar to enter the cells and lowers the amount of sugar in the bloodstream. A buildup of sugar in the bloodstream can cause life-threatening complications increasing the likelihood that children may develop serious long-term complications in later life such as blind-



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ness, kidney disease, and heart disease.

A generation ago type 2 diabetes in the US was unheard of in anyone under 30. Over the last 20 years the number of children and adolescents with the condi-

tion has skyrocketed prompting experts to call it an epidemic. Nine of the ten states with the highest type 2 diabetes rates are in the South including South Carolina. The cause? Suspects include rising childhood obesity rates due to a lack of regular exercise and eating fast food. A study out of Northwestern University identifies another culprit: most packaged foods available in the U.S. are ultra-processed and unhealthy. The term "ultra-processed" is defined as foods that are industrial formulations created in laboratories made from substances extracted from foods, i.e. oils, fats, sugar, starch and proteins.

Researchers are focusing on the following childhood risk factors:

- Being overweight. The more fatty tissue a child has — especially around the abdomen — the more resistant their bodies become to insulin.
- Lack of physical activity. Being active helps control weight, uses glucose as energy, and makes cells more responsive to insulin.
- There is increased risk if a child has a parent or sibling with diabetes.
- African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are at higher risk.
- Children tend to develop type 2 diabetes at the start of puberty. Adolescent girls have greater risk than adolescent boys.

Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have predicted that one in three children born in the US will likely develop type 2 diabetes sometime in their lifetime, unless they get more exercise and improve their diets.

In our next feature we will discuss type 2 diabetes symptoms and the suggested

methods of prevention. In the meantime, if you suspect your child — or any member of your family may be at risk — I urge you to see your doctor. Call us with questions. Think of us as your hometown resource for guidance and support.

Dr. Gabrielle F. Cannick is the owner of Grand Oaks Dental, located at 3905 Liberty Highway in Anderson. A strong believer that dental fear and anxiety should not prevent any patient from receiving the highest quality dental care, Dr. Cannick has received extensive training in Sedation Dentistry and is a certified member of the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation. She is also a member of the South Carolina Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, and the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine. For more information about Grand Oaks Dental and the services provided, please call 864-224-0809, or click to [grandoaksdental.com](http://grandoaksdental.com) or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GrandOaksDental>.



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