**Fast Facts:** Type 2 Diabetes
More than 25.8 million Americans (8.3% of the population) have type 2 diabetes, which magnifies the risk of early heart disease — but is very responsive to changes in diet.
by Robert A. Barnett

**What Is It?**
- Excessive body fat sets the stage for type 2 diabetes by decreasing the body's ability to use insulin. Insulin resistance and or inadequate insulin production can keep blood sugar high between meals.
- Not everyone with a spare tire gets type 2 diabetes. Genetics also plays a role.
- The primary dietary contributor is excess calories, which leads to weight gain.
- Too little exercise contributes to both weight gain and poor insulin sensitivity.
- Even though a tendency for type 2 diabetes is genetic, the disease may be kept at bay by keeping body fat within a healthy range through diet and exercise.
- Type 2 diabetes can sometimes be controlled completely through diet and exercise, particularly if the disease is caught early.
- A weight loss of 10 - 20 pounds may be enough to get blood sugars under control.

**Tips**
- Control calories.
- If you're overweight, lose body fat by cutting calories and increasing exercise.
- Simply moving more on a daily basis will help your insulin work better and help control diabetes — even if you don't lose weight.
- It’s easier to keep blood sugar in the desirable range with ample selections of leafy vegetables and beans. Replace sugary and low-fiber starchy foods with whole fruits and whole grains.
- Focus on fiber. Make sure that each meal and snack contains fiber. This has two important benefits: Fiber absorbs water and makes you feel full, and soluble fiber may slow down the absorption of carbohydrates, which gives insulin more time to clear sugar from the blood.

Robert A. Barnett is an award-winning journalist who specializes in food and nutrition. He is the author of Tonics (HarperPerennial, 1997), coauthor of The Guilt-Free Comfort Food Cookbook (Thomas Nelson, 1996), and coauthor of Magic Foods (Readers Digest, 2007).

© 2013 All Rights Reserved.