Although diabetes is a common problem in adults, many people do not realize that it can affect children. Diabetes is known to cause many problems in childhood and is associated with short and long term complications with many effects on organs.

F or many people, the commonly held belief is that diabetes is a disease of middle age and older. It is generally thought that this disease affects fat and overweight adults. It may come as a complete surprise that it could occur in children as well. All types of diabetes are known to occur in children and to compound matters, there is a documented age group that can acquire, age group that can acquire, type 1 or type 2 diabetes, which can manifest at any stage of life.

The human body is specifically geared to function in a state of balance and maintenance of blood glucose levels. On the one hand, one must specifically promote the utilization of blood glucose to promote energy production; on the other hand, one must be able to cause it to be brought down, to be regulated, so that the internal body equilibrium is sustained by a specialized set of cells in the pancreas. Whatever the blood sugar level goes up, there is immediate reciprocal increased blood flow to bring it down. Diabetes mellitus is a group of metabolic diseases characterized by the presence of raised blood glucose levels for a prolonged period of time.

There are several forms of diabetes and each has its own specific clinical features. Type 1 diabetes is characterized by a relative deficiency of insulin, Type 2 diabetes is characterized by a relative insulin resistance, and gestational diabetes is characterized by a relative increase in insulin resistance during pregnancy.

Both types of diabetes can occur in children of any age, including babies and infants. The most worrying aspect of the current scenario is that Type 2 diabetes is being increasingly identified with the global epidemic of obesity. In the United States, the prevalence of obesity among adults has more than doubled since the 1980s, and the prevalence among children has almost tripled. As a result, the number of children and adolescents being diagnosed with diabetes has increased dramatically.

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease, which means that the body’s immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. This leads to a lack of insulin in the blood, which causes the blood glucose levels to rise. Type 2 diabetes is characterized by insulin resistance, which means that the body’s cells do not respond properly to insulin. This can lead to high blood glucose levels, which can cause damage to various parts of the body, such as the eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart.

Type 1 diabetes can be treated with insulin injections, but there is no cure for the disease. Type 2 diabetes can often be managed with lifestyle changes, such as a healthy diet and regular exercise, and medications, such as oral diabetes medications or insulin. However, for people with type 2 diabetes, lifestyle changes are often insufficient to control blood glucose levels, and they may require insulin therapy as well.

Prevention is key in managing diabetes. Eating a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity, and maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce the risk of developing diabetes. For people already diagnosed with diabetes, close monitoring of blood glucose levels, regular exercise, and a healthy diet can help control blood glucose levels and prevent complications.

Dr. N. M. Perera, Consultant Paediatrician

The treatment of Type 2 diabetes involves lifestyle modifications to improve physical activity and blood glucose control. Weight loss, if possible, is recommended. In addition, lifestyle changes are necessary to manage Type 1 diabetes, such as regular insulin injections and blood glucose monitoring.

In conclusion, diabetes in children is a growing concern due to the increasing prevalence of obesity and type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents. Early detection and management of diabetes in children are crucial to prevent complications and improve long-term outcomes.