

Autoantibodies

Autoantibodies are markers in the blood made by the immune system. The immune system protects us from infection, but sometimes it mistakenly attacks our healthy cells. For example, beta cells in the pancreas make insulin, which controls blood sugar. In type 1 diabetes, the immune system attacks the beta cells. Type 1 diabetes starts before the onset of symptoms like increased thirst and urination. We can screen for these early “stages” of type 1 diabetes by looking for autoantibody markers in the blood.

Stages of type 1 diabetes:

Stage 1

- At least 2 autoantibodies present
- Normal sugar levels
- No symptoms

Stage 2

- At least 2 autoantibodies present
- Abnormal sugar levels
- No symptoms

Stage 3

- Autoantibodies
- Elevated sugar levels
- Symptoms may be present
- Insulin is started in this stage

Type 1 diabetes develops over time, and early screening can help spot signs before symptoms appear, allowing you to take proactive steps and be better prepared