

INFORMATION

FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

WHAT IS PREDIABETES?

Prediabetes means you have elevated blood sugar levels, but not yet in the diabetes range. This indicates that your body isn't adequately processing the various sugars in your diet, usually because it isn't producing enough insulin or isn't responding effectively to insulin. No matter who you are, you should go to <https://doihaveprediabetes.org/prediabetes-risk-test.html> and take the test. Everyone should take it, but you are at increased risk for prediabetes if you:

- have a mother, father, sister, or brother with diabetes
- have ever been diagnosed with high blood pressure
- are a man
- are even a little bit overweight
- don't exercise 150 minutes each week

Without making lifestyle changes, prediabetes can lead to type 2 diabetes – a very serious condition that affects every major organ in the body. People with diabetes often develop major complications, such as kidney failure, heart disease, stroke, blindness, and nerve damage, which can lead to amputation of a toe, foot, or leg.

Don't let the "pre" in "prediabetes" fool you; it is a serious condition that used to be called "borderline diabetes." Research indicates that prediabetes is often associated with heart attacks and can damage your kidneys, even if you haven't progressed to type 2 diabetes.

But the good news is, prediabetes is reversible and type 2 diabetes is preventable. If you or a loved one is diagnosed with prediabetes, think of prediabetes as a wake-up call that can prevent a more serious illness.

How do I know if I have prediabetes?

Through a simple blood test, you can know if you have prediabetes and start to do something about it. That test is called the A1C test. Go to your doctor and get it.

Prediabetes usually has no symptoms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 3 Americans has prediabetes. And 90% of people with prediabetes don't even know they have it!

Waist size matters! More than 60 years ago, physicians observed that people with larger waists had a higher risk of premature cardiovascular disease and death than people who had trimmer waists or carried more of their weight around their hips and thighs. We now know that the risk of insulin resistance goes up for men with waists larger than 40 inches and for women with waists larger than 35 inches.



Weight. Being overweight is a primary risk factor for prediabetes. The more fat you have — especially around your abdomen — the more resistant your cells become to insulin.



Dietary patterns. Eating red meat and processed meat, and drinking sugar-sweetened beverages are associated with a higher risk of prediabetes. A diet high in fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, and olive oil is associated with a lower risk of prediabetes.



Inactivity. The less active you are, the greater your risk of prediabetes. Physical activity helps you control your weight, uses up glucose as energy, and makes your cells more sensitive to insulin.



Age. Although diabetes can develop at any age, the risk of prediabetes increases after age 45. This may be because people tend to exercise less, lose muscle mass, and gain weight as they age.

 **Family history.** Your risk of prediabetes increases if you have a parent or sibling with type 2 diabetes.

 **Race.** Although it's unclear why, people of certain races – including African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, and Pacific Islanders – are more likely to develop prediabetes.

 **Gestational diabetes.** If you developed gestational diabetes while pregnant, you and your child are at higher risk of developing prediabetes. If you gave birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds (4.1 kilograms), you're also at increased risk of prediabetes.

 **Polycystic ovary syndrome.** This common condition – characterized by irregular menstrual periods, excess hair growth, and obesity – increases women's risk of prediabetes.

 **Sleep.** People with a certain sleep disorder (obstructive sleep apnea) have an increased risk of insulin resistance. People who work changing shifts or night shifts, possibly causing sleep problems, also may be at increased risk of prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.

What can I do about it?

The key to containing prediabetes is making lifestyle changes. Many people with prediabetes who do not change their lifestyle – by losing weight (if needed) and being more physically active – will develop type 2 diabetes within 5 years.



Sources:

<https://www.webmd.com/diabetes/what-is-prediabetes-or-borderline-diabetes>

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/diabetesprevention/index.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/prediabetes/symptoms-causes/syc-20355278>

<https://www.endocrineweb.com/conditions/pre-diabetes/pre-diabetes>

Important lifestyle change to make now

To avoid developing type 2 diabetes, you should focus on three main areas:

1. PROPER NUTRITION

Eat healthy foods. Go for meals that mix low-fat protein, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit calories, serving sizes, sugar, and starchy carbs. Choose fiber-rich foods, which help you feel full and not eat too much.

2. EXERCISE

When you exercise, your body uses more glucose, so exercising can lower your blood glucose level. When you exercise, your body doesn't need as much insulin to transport the glucose and you become less insulin-resistant. Since your body isn't using insulin well when you have prediabetes, a lower insulin resistance is a very good thing.

And of course, there are all the traditional benefits of exercise: it can help you lose weight, keep your heart healthy, make you sleep better, and even improve your mood.

Aim to get at least 150 minutes a week of an activity such as swimming, cycling, or brisk walking or similar activity. An aerobic activity – one that gets your heart rate up – is ideal. That's just 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

3. WEIGHT LOSS

If you're overweight, your prediabetes is more likely to turn into diabetes. Losing just 5% to 7% of your body weight (that's only 10-14 pounds for someone who weighs 200 pounds) can make a big difference in preventing the onset of diabetes. The combination of eating properly and exercising more is a great way to lose weight and then maintain your new, healthy weight.

Together with your doctor, keep a close watch on your blood glucose levels, monitoring them to make sure that your prediabetes doesn't become type 2 diabetes. Your doctor and dietician can adjust your diet or exercise routine as needed to better control your blood glucose levels.