

Pre-Diabetes: Frequently Asked Questions



What is pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is a condition that most people have before they develop diabetes. It means that your blood sugar (glucose) is higher than normal, but not high enough to be diagnosed with diabetes. Pre-diabetes means you have a fasting blood sugar level of 100 to 125 mg/dl.

If you are diagnosed with pre-diabetes, you are at higher risk for developing diabetes in the future. Pre-diabetes also puts you at greater risk for heart disease and stroke. The good news is that maintaining a healthy weight and being more active can reverse pre-diabetes and delay or prevent type 2 diabetes.

What is type 2 diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition that makes it hard for your body to turn the food that you eat into energy. After you eat, your body releases a hormone (insulin) that helps the sugar from your food to enter the cells where it is used for energy. When you do not make enough insulin – or your body does not use insulin well – sugar builds up in your blood. High blood sugar can damage your nerves and blood vessels. This may lead to a heart attack, stroke, or other serious health problems.

What else increases my risk for diabetes?

You are at greater risk for diabetes if you:

- are age 40 or over
- carry excess weight (especially around the waist)
- are not physically active
- have a family member with type 2 diabetes
- have high blood pressure (over 140/90 mmHg)
- have low HDL cholesterol (35 mg/dl or lower) or high triglycerides (250 mg/dl or higher)
- are African American, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, or Pacific Islander
- have had diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) or have given birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds

What can I do to delay or prevent type 2 diabetes?

You can reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes by making healthy changes in your lifestyle. In the following sections you will find tips for making small changes that will have big effects on your health. Also, talk to your doctor about checking your blood sugar regularly in order to address any increases in blood sugar levels early.

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1. Move more: Be physically active every day.

Physical activity is one of the most effective ways to delay or prevent type 2 diabetes. It also benefits your health by decreasing blood pressure and reducing your risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, and some cancers. Physical activity may also decrease your level of total cholesterol. Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity on most days.

- Make physical activity a social event. Go for walks or bike rides with family or friends.
- Consider using home exercise videos or exercise equipment.
- Try to get activity in throughout the day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Use a pedometer (step-counter) to track your steps. Determine how many steps you currently walk in a day, and then increase this number by 50 to 100 steps each week.
- Try strength training by lifting light weights a few times every week.

Eat more . . .

- Baked, boiled, broiled, or steamed food
- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole wheat bread and brown rice
- Nonfat milk, nonfat yogurt, nonfat cheese

Eat less . . .

- Pan fried or deep-fat fried foods
- French fries, chips, crackers
- White bread, white rice, and potatoes
- High-fat dairy foods, such as whole milk, cheese, cream, and ice cream

2. Eat healthier: Make wise food choices.

Changing what you eat can be hard. But when it comes to preventing a disease like type 2 diabetes, it's worth the effort to stay healthy. The following tips can help you get started:

- Choose smaller portions.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Try to eat slowly. It takes your stomach 20 minutes to tell your brain that it is full.
- Cut back on sugar by limiting sweetened beverages, like soda and fruit juice, or by switching to sugar-free drinks.
- Choose foods that are lower in fat and calories.

3. Maintain a healthy weight

Losing weight and keeping it off is an important part of delaying or preventing type 2 diabetes. The key to maintaining weight is balancing the amount of calories you eat and drink with the amount you burn through regular physical activity. If you are overweight, losing 5 to 10 percent of your current body weight will improve your health.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- For more information on preventing diabetes, visit kp.org/healthyliving.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.