

Type 2 Diabetes: Act Now to Reduce Your Risks



Weight gain and low levels of physical activity increase your chances of getting 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 causes blood sugar 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 causing diabetes. Over the years, this high blood sugar can damage your nerves and blood vessels. This may lead to heart attack, stroke, and other health problems.

The most common kind of diabetes is type 2. Weight gain and low levels of physical activity increase the chance that you'll get type 2 diabetes.

People at risk for diabetes may be told that they have pre-diabetes. Pre-diabetes means that your blood sugar levels are higher than normal levels, but not yet in the diabetes range (see the table).

	Fasting Glucose
Normal	Less than 100
Pre-diabetes	100-125
Diabetes	126 or greater

What are the signs and symptoms of diabetes?

- tired a lot of the time
- always thirsty
- need to urinate often
- blurry vision
- more hungry than usual
- wounds or cuts that won't heal
- numbness or tingling of the feet
- frequent vaginal infections
- sudden weight loss

If you have any of these symptoms, tell your doctor or other medical professional as soon as possible.

How do I know if I should be tested for diabetes?

If you have symptoms of diabetes, you should get tested. Also if you are 45 years old and have one or more of the “high-risk” factors listed on the back page, get tested for diabetes every one to three years. If you are 45 years or older with no “high-risk” factors, get tested every 5 years. However, if you have had gestational diabetes, pre-diabetes, or have a very unhealthy weight, you'll want to get tested *every* year.

Which test will tell me if I have diabetes?

The fasting blood glucose test is the most common test used to diagnose diabetes. For this test, you will need to go to the lab where they will draw your blood, usually in the morning



To learn if you are at high risk for type 2 diabetes, check each risk factor that applies to you:

- You have a brother, sister, or parent with diabetes.
- You are American Indian, Latino, African American, or Asian/Pacific Islander.
- You have had a baby weighing more than nine pounds or have been told by your doctor or other medical professional that you have had “gestational diabetes.”
- You are overweight. An unhealthy weight is defined as a Body Mass Index, or BMI, over 25. Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measure of body weight relative to height. (To find a BMI calculator, log on to members.kp.org.)
- You have high blood pressure (138/89 or greater), or low HDL cholesterol (35 or less) or high triglycerides (greater than 250).
- You have been told by your doctor or other medical professional that you have pre-diabetes.
- You are a woman with polycystic ovarian syndrome.
- You exercise less than three times a week.

The more boxes you checked the higher your chance of getting type 2 diabetes.

after you have not had anything to eat or drink (except water) for about eight hours. You will then be asked to get a second fasting blood glucose test on a different day.

This second test will confirm the results from the first test. If you have any symptoms of diabetes, your doctor or other medical professional may order a random blood glucose test instead.

What can I do if I am at risk for diabetes?

To help delay or reduce your risk of diabetes you can:

- Eat fewer calories.
- Eat less fat. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Get more physical activity, at least 30 to 60 minutes every day.
- Lose a small amount of weight (about 5 to 10 percent of your body weight) if you are overweight.
- Maintain a healthy weight (BMI between 18 to 25).

These changes help most people living with diabetes stay healthy. Many people living with diabetes will also need to take diabetes pills or insulin shots to help control their diabetes. If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar and blood pressure often at home. This can help you

avoid long-term damage to your eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart.

Making big changes in your life is hard, especially if you are making many changes at the same time. A team of diabetes medical professionals at Kaiser Permanente will work with you to make these changes to help keep you healthy.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at members.kp.org. Here you'll find the Health Encyclopedia, which offers more in-depth information on this and many other topics.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Contact your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.
- Contact the National Diabetes Education Program at www.ndep.nih.gov or 1-800-438-5383.