

Type 2 Diabetes: Act Now to Lower Your Risks



Maintaining a healthy weight and becoming physically active decreases your chances of getting type 2 diabetes.

People with type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetes can live healthy lives, especially when they make changes early on. Increasing your activity level and making healthy food choices are two of the best changes you can make.

Diabetes 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 the cells in your body do not use insulin well and you do not make enough insulin, sugar builds up in your blood. This is what causes diabetes. Over time, this high blood sugar can damage your nerves and blood vessels. This may lead to

heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, eye disease and other health problems.

The most common kind of diabetes is type 2. Gaining weight and low levels of physical activity increase the chances 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, but aren't as high as someone who already has diabetes. (See the Fasting Glucose table).

Fasting Glucose (mg/dL)	
Normal	Less than 100
Pre-diabetes	100-125
Diabetes	126 or greater

What are the signs and symptoms of diabetes?

People who develop diabetes may have one or more of these symptoms:

- Often feeling very tired
- Being thirsty a lot
- Frequent urination
- A sudden or unexplained weight loss
- Blurry vision
- Being more hungry than usual
- Wounds or cuts that won't heal
- Numbness or tingling of the feet
- Frequent vaginal or skin infections

If you have any of these symptoms, tell your doctor or other medical

professional right away. Sometimes there are no symptoms at all, and that's why testing is so important.

Should I be tested for diabetes?

- If you have symptoms of diabetes, you should get tested, no matter what your age.
- If you are over 45 years old, you should get tested, even if you feel well and have no symptoms of or risks of diabetes.
- If you are under age 45, consider getting tested if you are overweight – you have a Body Mass Index (BMI) over 25 – and you have additional risk factors listed on the back page. If the test result is normal, plan to get tested again in another 3 years.
- If you have had gestational diabetes, or pre-diabetes, 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. The test is usually done in the morning after you have not had anything to eat or drink (except water) for about eight hours. If the first test is high (over 125 mg/dL), then you may be asked to get a second fasting blood glucose test on a different day to confirm the results.

If you have any symptoms of diabetes, your doctor or other medical professional may order a random blood glucose test instead.

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Diabetes Risk Factors!

Check those that apply to you:

- You have a brother, sister, or parent with diabetes.
- You are Native American, Latino, African American, Asian American or 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. This means you have a Body Mass Index, or BMI, over 25. (To find a BMI calculator, log on to kp.org/calculators)
- You have high blood pressure (140/90 mm/Hg or greater), or low HDL cholesterol (35 mg/dL or less) or high triglycerides (greater than 250 mg/dL).
- You have been told by your doctor or other medical professional that you have pre-diabetes.
- You are a woman with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).
- You exercise less than three times a week.

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

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

To help delay or lessen 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 as well. Many people living with diabetes will also need to take diabetes pills or insulin shots to help manage 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 can be hard, especially if you make many changes at the same time. So plan to use some of the many resources offered at a Kaiser Permanente facility near you. We have weight management, physical activity, and pre-diabetes education programs available to help lower your risk of developing diabetes.

Other resources

Web sites

- Visit kp.org/mydoctor.
- Try an Online Health Coach video coaching program. Start today to improve your eating habits and be more active.
- Visit our Web site at kp.org/diabetes. Here you'll find more information about diabetes and other topics.
- Try our personalized online programs at www.kp.org/healthyliving to get support for your weight loss and activity goals.
- Contact your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.