



Diabetes prevention: 5 tips for taking control

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Changing your lifestyle could be a big step toward diabetes prevention — and it's never too late to start. Consider these tips.

By Mayo Clinic Staff

When it comes to type 2 diabetes — the most common type of diabetes — prevention is a big deal. It's especially important to make diabetes prevention a priority if you're at increased risk of diabetes, such as if you're overweight or you have a family history of the disease.

Diabetes prevention is as basic as eating more healthfully, becoming more physically active and losing a few extra pounds. It's never too late to start. Making a few simple changes in your lifestyle now may help you avoid the serious health complications of diabetes down the road, such as nerve, kidney and heart damage. Consider the latest diabetes prevention tips from the American Diabetes Association.

1. Get more physical activity

There are many benefits to regular physical activity. Exercise can help you:

- Lose weight
- Lower your blood sugar
- Boost your sensitivity to insulin — which helps keep your blood sugar within a normal range

Research shows that aerobic exercise and resistance training can help control diabetes. The greatest benefit comes from a fitness program that includes both.

2. Get plenty of fiber

It's rough, it's tough — and it may help you:

- Reduce your risk of diabetes by improving your blood sugar control
- Lower your risk of heart disease
- Promote weight loss by helping you feel full

Foods high in fiber include fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains and nuts.

3. Go for whole grains

It's not clear why, but whole grains may reduce your risk of diabetes and help maintain blood sugar levels. Try to make at least half your grains whole grains. Many foods made from whole grains come ready to eat, including various breads, pasta products and cereals. Look for the word "whole" on the package and among the first few items in the ingredient list.

4. Lose extra weight

If you're overweight, diabetes prevention may hinge on weight loss. Every pound you lose can improve your health, and you may be surprised by how much. Participants in one large study who lost a modest amount of weight — around 7 percent of initial body weight — and exercised regularly reduced the risk of developing diabetes by almost 60 percent.

5. Skip fad diets and just make healthier choices

Low-carb diets, the glycemic index diet or other fad diets may help you lose weight at first. But their effectiveness at preventing diabetes isn't known, nor are their long-term effects. And by excluding or strictly limiting a particular food group, you may be giving up essential nutrients. Instead, make variety and portion control part of your healthy-eating plan.

When to see your doctor

If you're older than age 45 and your weight is normal, ask your doctor if diabetes testing is appropriate for you. The American Diabetes Association recommends blood glucose screening if:

- You're age 45 or older and overweight
- You're younger than age 45 and overweight, with one or more additional risk factors for type 2 diabetes — such as a sedentary lifestyle or a family history of diabetes

Share your concerns about diabetes prevention with your doctor. He or she will applaud your efforts to keep diabetes at bay, and perhaps offer additional suggestions based on your medical history or other factors.