

PREDIABETES: A CALL TO ACTION

If you've been told you have prediabetes, it's time to take control of your condition and prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

If your doctor has said you have prediabetes, you may not be too concerned. But don't take it lightly. Although prediabetes is not yet diabetes, it is a warning sign that type 2 diabetes may lie ahead. It means your body may not be using or making insulin properly.

Prediabetes can be a slippery slope to diabetes. An estimated 26 million people in the U.S. have diabetes. Another 79 million have prediabetes. Each year, some of these people will progress to full-blown diabetes. And many of them won't even realize it. But, diabetes can often be prevented. Learn the steps you can take to protect your health.

PREVENTING DIABETES

Prediabetes doesn't have to become diabetes. Research has found that diabetes can be prevented or delayed with lifestyle changes. In fact, some people can get their blood sugar levels back to normal range.

TO PREVENT OR DELAY DIABETES:

- Lose some weight. Losing just 5 to 7 percent of your weight can make a big difference in your blood sugar. For a 200-pound person, that's a weight loss of only 10 to 14 pounds.
- Boost your physical activity. Moderate exercise, like walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week, can lower your blood sugar and also help you lose weight.

Just making these two changes can cut your risk of getting diabetes by more than half. These lifestyle changes can also help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol. Talk to your doctor about how to start exercising and making healthy food choices that can help you lose weight.

WHAT IS PREDIABETES?

Prediabetes means your blood sugar level is higher than normal but not yet high enough to be called diabetes. And it tends to get worse over time. If you have prediabetes, there is a good chance that you will get diabetes within the next 10 years unless you take steps to prevent it.

Your body's cells need glucose (sugar) for energy. But the cells can't use glucose unless they also have insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas. Having prediabetes means your body isn't making enough insulin and or has trouble using the insulin it produces. This causes sugar to build up in your blood. Even before your blood sugar rises high enough to be diabetes, it may cause lasting damage to your blood vessels and increase your risk of heart disease and other harmful conditions.

HOW WILL I KNOW I HAVE PREDIABETES:

You probably won't know you have prediabetes unless you get tested. Prediabetes usually doesn't cause any symptoms. You can have diabetes without knowing it because many symptoms can come on so gradually that you may not notice them.

A blood test can show if your blood sugar, or plasma glucose, is above normal. Your doctor can use any of these three tests to check for prediabetes:

- Fasting plasma glucose. For this test, your blood is tested first thing in the morning after an eight-hour fast. A result of 100 to 125 mg/dL may mean you have prediabetes.
- Oral glucose tolerance. For this test, your blood is tested first thing in the morning after fasting and again two hours after you drink a sugary drink. A result of 140 to 199 mg/dL may mean you have prediabetes.
- Hemoglobin A1C (HbA1C) test. This is a simple blood test. You will not need to change your diet. An A1C level of 5.7 to 6.4 percent may signal prediabetes.

WHO SHOULD BE TESTED FOR PREDIABETES?

The American Diabetes Association says anyone age 45 and older should be tested. If you're younger than 45 and overweight, your doctor may want you to be tested if you have any other risk factors for diabetes, such as:

- Lack of exercise
- High blood pressure
- High triglycerides and/or low HDL (good) cholesterol
- A history of heart disease
- A parent or sibling with diabetes
- A history of gestational diabetes, or having given birth to a baby who weighed more than nine pounds
- Polycystic ovary syndrome or PCOS
- Belonging to a high-risk ethnic group, including African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American or Pacific Islander

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