

Are You at Risk for Developing Diabetes?

Right now, we're experiencing an epidemic of type 2 diabetes. More than 30 million people in the U.S.— nearly 10 percent of Americans—are diagnosed with diabetes, and experts think another 23 million people have diabetes but don't know it.

In addition, more than 80 million people are "prediabetic." This means that their blood sugar levels are already too high, and they're likely to become diabetic in just a few years.

Even worse, diabetes is striking at younger and younger ages. Type 2 diabetes used to be called "adult diabetes," and doctors rarely saw it in people under 45. But today, more and more people are developing diabetes in their early twenties or even in their teens.

This is definitely scary stuff. However, the good news is that you can take simple steps to dramatically lower your risk of diabetes—even if you're already prediabetic. Here's a look at the biggest risk factors for type 2 diabetes, and how you can protect yourself.

How many risk factors do you have?

You can become diabetic even if you don't have any risk factors at all.

However, you're at higher risk if you answer "yes" to any of these questions:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you overweight? | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you ever had gestational diabetes (diabetes that occurs during pregnancy)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you over the age of 45? | <input type="checkbox"/> Have you ever given birth to a baby weighing more than nine pounds? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a parent or sibling with type 2 diabetes? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have prediabetes? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you eat a high-carb or "junk food" diet? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you sedentary? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you smoke? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you African American, Hispanic, a Native American, or a Pacific Islander? | |

The more “yes” answers you have, the higher your risk is. That’s the bad news... but now, let’s get to the good news.

How can you slash your risk for diabetes?

It’s true that you can’t change some diabetes risk factors, like your age or your genes. However, here’s the exciting news: You can completely eliminate some of your biggest risks!

In addition to giving up the cigarette habit if you smoke, here are the three biggest steps you can take to avoid becoming another statistic in the diabetes epidemic:

1. CUT THE CARBS

For years, we’ve been told to eat a high-carb diet. Sadly, that’s exactly what got so many people right where they are now: on the path to diabetes.

When you load up on carbs—even supposedly “healthy” carbs like whole grains, which turn into sugar when you eat them—you constantly spike your levels of insulin. Eventually, your cells get tired of insulin continually knocking on their doors with a load of sugar, and you develop a condition called insulin resistance. That’s the first step in the development of obesity and diabetes.

What’s the answer? Stop loading up on carbs. Instead, eat lean, clean proteins, non-starchy veggies, and healthy fats like olive oil, pastured butter, coconut oil, avocados, and nuts. Limit your carbs to small servings of fruit and starchy vegetables like beets and sweet potatoes. Go ahead and cheat every once in a while, but follow this low-carb template for at least 80% of your meals.

When you eat this way, you’ll lose weight effortlessly. What’s more, you’ll go from insulin-resistant to insulin-sensitive—and that’s a beautiful thing.

When you’re cutting down on carbs, watch what you drink as well as what you eat. Research shows that your risk of developing diabetes is 26 percent higher if you consume one or more sugary beverages a day. So ditch the sugary sodas, and switch from sweetened to unsweetened coffee drinks.

2. DO INTERMITTENT FASTING

When it comes to preventing diabetes, this simple trick is a game-changer. It’s the fastest way on the planet to lose weight and reverse insulin resistance—two “musts” if you want to stay diabetes-free.

What’s more, you don’t even need to commit to a full-day fast to see results. Recently, researchers tested the effects of simply restricting eating to fewer hours each day. They asked one group of prediabetic men to eat all their meals between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., while another group ate any time during a 12-hour window (between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.). After five weeks, the control group

switched to the restricted-eating program.

What happened? When the men limited their eating window to six hours, they improved their insulin sensitivity, their post-meal insulin levels, and the responsiveness of their pancreatic beta cells (which produce insulin). In addition, they lowered their levels of oxidative stress, which plays a major role in diabetes.

What's interesting is that the researchers intentionally adjusted the men's food intake so they wouldn't lose weight on their restricted-eating days. This proves that intermittent fasting has diabetes-preventing effects that go well beyond weight loss. (Of course, weight loss is a huge bonus!)

Another powerful fasting technique is to fast for 24 hours once or twice a week, eating nothing but bone broth. This is the cornerstone of the Bone Broth Diet, which has helped hundreds of thousands of people take off their extra weight and lower their risk for diabetes. If you're new to fasting, a full 24-hour fast may sound a little intimidating—but thanks to the craving-crushing power of bone broth, most people find that it's much easier than they expected.

3. GET OFF YOUR BUTT!

Exercise burns off glucose and enhances your insulin sensitivity, lowering your chances of developing diabetes. Sitting, in contrast, packs on pounds and makes you insulin-resistant. So it's a no-brainer: you've got to move every day.

And don't worry if you're not a fan of strenuous exercise, because you don't need to do CrossFit or even hit the gym. In fact, according to findings from the Nurses' Health Study, simply walking briskly for half an hour a day can cut your risk of diabetes.

So instead of collapsing in front of the TV in the evening, take a walk around the neighborhood—or combine your couch-potato time with a workout by stepping in place while you're binge-watching Netflix. Every single step you take will lower your odds of getting diabetes.

The bottom line: **Take action now**

We now know that type 2 diabetes is largely a "lifestyle disease"—and that's great news, because you have total control over your lifestyle. What's more, the sooner you adopt a diabetes-fighting lifestyle, the lower your risk of getting this devastating disease will be.

So take charge now. It's easy: Lower your carbs, go "food-free" on a regular basis by restricting your eating window or doing 24-hour fasts, and get some exercise every day (even if it's just a brisk walk). These three simple investments in your health can lead to a big payoff: a long, happy, diabetes-free life!