

# Tips to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes

**Type 2 diabetes is a condition that causes very high levels of sugar in the blood. If you are close to developing diabetes, there are certain things you can do to prevent it. In this handout, you will learn about simple changes you can make to your diet and lifestyle that can lower your risk of developing diabetes.**

## WHAT IS TYPE 2 DIABETES?

**Type 2 diabetes** is a condition that causes very high levels of sugar in the blood. It also affects how the **pancreas** (an organ behind the stomach that releases insulin) function. **Insulin** is a hormone that helps your body use sugar for energy.

When a person has type 2 diabetes, the body does not respond well to insulin and the pancreas does not release enough insulin to control blood sugar levels. This causes extra sugar to build up in the body.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TYPE 2 DIABETES?

- Fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- Feeling very thirsty
- Urinating more than usual
- Blurry eyesight
- Darkening and thickening of skin, usually around the neck and under the arms

## WHO IS MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP DIABETES?

People with one or more of the following risk factors are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes:

- If you are overweight or obese
- Family history of type 2 diabetes or certain conditions that affect how the body makes and uses insulin
- Females with a history of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS, a condition that causes tiny cysts in the ovaries and higher male hormone levels than typically seen in women)
- If you are Hispanic, Native American or Black

## IS DIABETES DANGEROUS?

Diabetes is not dangerous as long as you live a healthy lifestyle and take any prescribed medication for diabetes the way your doctor tells you to. A **healthy lifestyle** means eating a healthy diet and staying active.

If you do not control diabetes, it can lead to the following serious health concerns:

- Problems with your eyes, nerves and kidneys
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- High levels of fat in the blood
- Higher risk of skin infections

## WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT DIABETES?

The most important thing you can do to prevent diabetes is to keep a healthy **BMI (body mass index)** through a healthy diet and exercise. You can follow these tips:

### Diet and nutrition

- **Eat a healthy diet with lots of vegetables, whole grains and fruits.** If you cannot find fresh fruits and vegetables, you can eat them canned or frozen in water or 100% juice (not syrup). Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables are just as healthy and tasty as fresh ones.
- **Choose grilled, broiled or baked foods.** These foods can help you feel fuller for longer. They can also help you keep a healthy weight.
- **Keep healthy snacks with you.** This can include fruits, veggie sticks, a handful of dry-roasted or raw nuts and whole grain crackers with hummus or low-fat dip.
- **Drink water or low-fat milk more often than soda, sweetened drinks and fruit juice (including 100 % fruit juice).**

### Exercise

- **Get moving!** Exercise, play a sport or play outside for at least 30 minutes (half an hour) 5-6 days a week. You can spread out the 30 minutes throughout the day if that works better for you.

### Sleep

- **Get enough sleep.** Sleep helps you in many ways, including keeping a healthy weight and feeling rested for the next day.

### ***Why is exercise important for me?***

Exercise is important for your health now and in the future for many reasons:

#### Now:

- Keeps you at a healthy weight and lowers body fat
- Builds muscle
- Helps you sleep better
- Improves coordination and focus in sports
- Helps you pay more attention in school
- Helps boost your self confidence

#### For the future:

- Lowers risk for serious health concerns, like obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure
- Builds strong bones
- Helps develop lifelong healthy habits so you grow up as healthy, strong and confident as possible
- Manages your weight as you grow up

### ***What is BMI?***

**BMI (body mass index)** is a measure of your weight for your age, gender and height. Your doctor can find your BMI and tell you what it means for your health. BMI changes with age. Below are BMIs in a fully-grown person (18 years or older):

- Healthy BMI = 18.5-24.9
- Overweight = 25-29.9
- Obesity = 30 or more

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