

# Prediabetes: Are You One of the Millions?

More than 30 million people in the United States have diabetes, and 1 in 4 of them don't know they have it. Another 84 million adults in the U.S. have *prediabetes*, a serious health condition in which blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough yet for a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes.

## Why is prediabetes a concern?

A person with prediabetes is at high risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Being overweight, being age 45 or older, and getting low levels of physical activity (less than three times per week) are risk factors for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. Other risk factors include having a family member (parent, brother, or sister) with type 2 diabetes, having gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy), or being African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, or Asian American. One in three adult Americans has prediabetes. To find out your risk, take the "Prediabetes Risk Test" at: [https://doihaveprediabetes.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Prediabetes\\_PrintableRiskTestEnglish.pdf](https://doihaveprediabetes.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Prediabetes_PrintableRiskTestEnglish.pdf)

## I have some of those risk factors — is there anything I can do?

Yes! Some risk factors for type 2 diabetes can't be changed, such as your age and family history, but some important factors CAN be tackled and improved. Prediabetes is a serious health condition, but it can often be reversed; though a person with prediabetes has blood sugar levels higher than normal, those levels are not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Risk factors you *can* change include being overweight, eating unhealthy food, being inactive, and smoking.



## I'm ready to make some changes. Where do I start?

If you are at high risk, the best thing to do is contact your doctor to see if additional testing is needed. Have a conversation with your health care provider about steps that could work for you. Small changes can bring about big improvement. Take action in these key areas:

- Manage your weight
- Eat healthier
- Get active
- Quit smoking

## Manage your weight

It doesn't take a major weight loss to make a big difference. Losing just 5 to 7 percent of your body weight can make the difference in lowering your risk for type 2 diabetes. For example, if you are a 5'3" woman who weighs 190 pounds, a 5 percent weight loss would be less than 10 pounds, and a 7 percent drop is just over 13 pounds. Focusing not only on what the scale says, but also on your activity level and food choices, will reinforce your efforts and help you stick with your healthy changes.

## Get active

If you haven't been physically active, it is wise to start small, then build in changes as your body becomes used to more movement. Make physical activity a priority, and work to increase your active time while decreasing your sedentary (sitting) time. Park away from the door — collect those extra steps! Think about ways that you like to be active. Is walking the dog your thing? Do you want to take up tango lessons? Is your bicycle waiting for you to come back? Is playing at the park with your kids a way you can see your entire family moving more? Maybe tracking your movement helps keep you going — it works for many people. Write down your steps, your repetitions, or your goals for the week. Find an exercise buddy and support each other when the going gets a little tough. Aim to get at least 2½ hours of moderately intense activity each week.

## Eat healthier

There are many ways that most people can improve their diets. Take a good look at how you eat now and consider where changes could happen. Sometimes it is habits or routines that keep you from making healthier choices (think about packing a piece of fresh fruit from home instead of hitting the vending machine at break time). Do you choose soda or coffee drinks for a pick-me-up? Save calories, lower the sugar in your diet, and give your body what it really wants by opting for water

at meals and throughout the day. Are you making healthful food choices, but simply eating too much? Many people (most Americans) would benefit from mindfully eating less — smaller portions, focusing only on food when eating, and slowing down while eating meals and snacks. Again, tracking your actions could be helpful — keep a food diary to note what you eat, where and when you eat, and how much.

For more information on ways you can eat healthier, learn about MyPlate resources at: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/start-simple-myplate>

## Quit smoking

If you smoke, quitting is the biggest step toward good health you can make. What reasons do you have for quitting? Make a list and let those reasons motivate you. Talk with your doctor about a plan that could work for you — there are new treatments and methods available. Not sure you can do it alone? You don't have to. Try quitting with a friend — you will both benefit big time, and you will each have someone who understands what you are facing. For free help with quitting, call 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669), visit <http://cdc.gov/tips>; you can also visit KanQuit, <http://www.kanquit.org/>.

Remember, prediabetes is reality for 1 in 3 U.S. adults. It could be you. Take steps now to move away from prediabetes.

Source: Ad Council. American Medical Association. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Do I have prediabetes?* <https://doihaveprediabetes.org>. Accessed February 19, 2019.

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