

Eight Ways to Prevent Diabetes

Lifestyle measures like healthy eating and exercise can reduce diabetes risk by nearly 60 percent—more than any medication can do. Follow these tips to help avoid diabetes.

1 Know your risk factors. The American Diabetes Association has identified 11 risk factors for diabetes: overweight, age 45 or older, family history of diabetes, high-risk ethnicity, lack of physical activity, history of gestational diabetes, delivering a baby weighing over 4 kg, high blood pressure, high triglycerides, low HDL cholesterol and a history of heart disease. Ask your doctor if any of these risks apply to you.

2 Know the risk factors you can change. Some risk factors (age, genes and medical history) cannot be changed. Others, like weight, physical activity, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, are within your control.

3 Control your weight. This is the most important thing you can do to lower your diabetes risk. Consume fewer calories each day than you burn off. Choose low-fat foods; downsize portions; replace starches like bread, cake and pasta with fruits and vegetables; drink water instead of high-calorie beverages; and cut out sweets. Lowering soda consumption can significantly decrease your risk of diabetes.

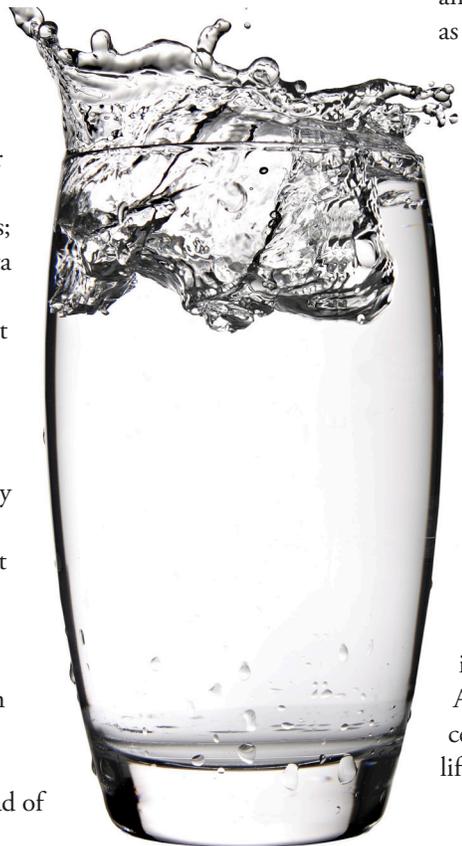
4 Exercise regularly. Physical activity helps with weight loss and can lift your mood. Check with your doctor first if you've never exercised or if it's been a while. Aim for at least 30 minutes of planned physical activity 5 days a week, combining aerobic exercise with strength training (lifting weights). Think of ways to add activity to your day: use the stairs instead of the elevator, take a walk instead of watching TV or dance off the pounds.

5 Control blood pressure. Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure and discuss how to control it. If you're overweight, lose weight. Limit alcohol. Limit sodium intake to less than 2,400 mg daily (about 1 tsp. of salt). Read food labels for sodium, calories and fat content.

6 Lower triglycerides and raise HDL cholesterol. Ask your doctor to check your cholesterol and triglycerides levels. Aim for a triglycerides level of 200 mg/dl or lower and a high-density lipoprotein (HDL, or "good" cholesterol) level of 40 mg/dl or higher (for men), 50 mg/dl or higher (for women). You can improve both triglycerides and HDL cholesterol by following the tips above, as well as by stopping smoking. Certain foods help as well: foods that are high in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, tuna, walnuts, flaxseed, canola or soybean oil), vegetables, fruit and whole grains or legumes.

7 Limit alcohol. Alcohol can add pounds and raise blood pressure and triglycerides while lowering HDL. Limit alcohol intake to one drink (355 ml of beer, 148 ml of wine or 44 ml of liquor) per day if you are a woman, two drinks per day if you are a man.

8 Make a plan and get support. Preventing diabetes requires an ongoing commitment to a healthy lifestyle. If you have prediabetes, talk about prevention with your family doctor, cardiologist or an endocrinologist (a doctor who specializes in diabetes and other conditions). Get informed by consulting the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org. Meet with a certified diabetes educator or dietitian for advice on lifestyle changes.



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