Be Aware of Complications

The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to develop complications.

Common complications of diabetes are:

Diabetic eye disease. People with diabetes are at risk for diabetic retinopathy (blindness), cataract (clouding of the lens), and glaucoma (vision loss due to increased pressure within the eye). Diabetic retinopathy, the most common, is a leading cause of blindness. It causes abnormalities in the blood vessels of the retina and may cause them to swell and leak fluid.

Action plan: Get an eye examination at least once a year. Eye exams can detect diabetic eye conditions before symptoms appear. If caught early, most can be successfully treated, saving your eyesight.

Nerve damage (neuropathy). Nerve damage numbs parts of the body, especially the feet and legs. Nerve damage to the feet can keep you from feeling sores and blisters and increase your chance of infection. Severe nerve damage can lead to amputation.

Action plan: Check your feet and legs for small cuts and blisters often (or have someone do it for you). Wash and dry your feet and change socks daily. Trim your toenails regularly to avoid ingrown nails. Have your doctor check your feet at every visit.

Narrowed blood vessels. Diabetes can narrow blood vessels, causing damage to the heart, kidneys, limbs and eyes.

Action plan: Visit your doctor for screenings to check blood vessel and organ function.

Tip: Even if you feel fine, get regular checkups. Most complications of diabetes can be successfully treated if they are caught early.

Know Your Numbers

You can check your blood sugar using a device called a glucose meter, usually by pricking your finger to draw a drop of blood. Ask your health care provider how often you should check your blood sugar levels and what range you should strive for. Also, ask about having a hemoglobin A1c test once or twice a year. This test provides a picture of blood glucose levels over several months, showing how well you are controlling your diabetes overall.

Don't avoid testing because you've lapsed on some of your healthy lifestyle choices. Learning to deal with blood sugar ups and downs is part of controlling diabetes successfully.

A note about meters: Glucose meters vary greatly in cost, features and ease of use. Some meters simply give a number, while others can be hooked up to a home computer or PDA to help track blood sugar control. New "painless" tests are available that use alternate test sites such as the arm or thigh. Not all meters are equal in accuracy, and you don't want to pay for features you won't use. Talk with your health care provider or pharmacist about which meter is right for you.

Take heart: Diabetes is a condition you can live with. Commit today to a healthy lifestyle that will help you feel in control.

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TYPE 2 DIABETES

Your Guide for Taking Control

WHAT IS DIABETES?

The body breaks down food into glucose (blood sugar) for fuel. For glucose to get from the bloodstream into the cells for growth and energy, insulin is produced by the pancreas, a gland behind the stomach.

In people with diabetes, the pancreas does not produce enough insulin, or the cells do not respond to the insulin that is produced, and glucose builds up in the blood. The body loses its main source of fuel even though the blood contains large amounts of glucose.

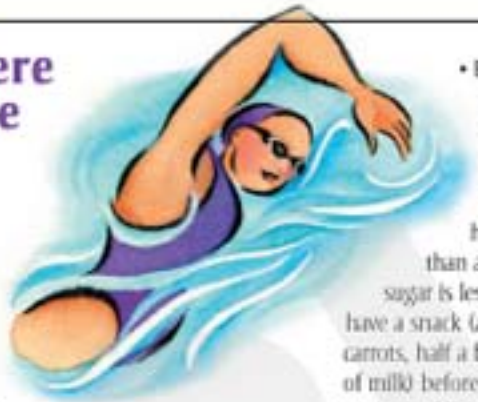
There are three forms of diabetes: type 1, type 2 and gestational. The most common of these is type 2.

A New Epidemic

More adults than ever before, and even children, are developing type 2 diabetes, leading researchers to label it an epidemic.

There is no cure for diabetes. However, if you have diabetes, controlling your blood sugar levels and making healthy lifestyle changes can help you lower your risk of diabetes-related health problems.

Get Out There & Get Active



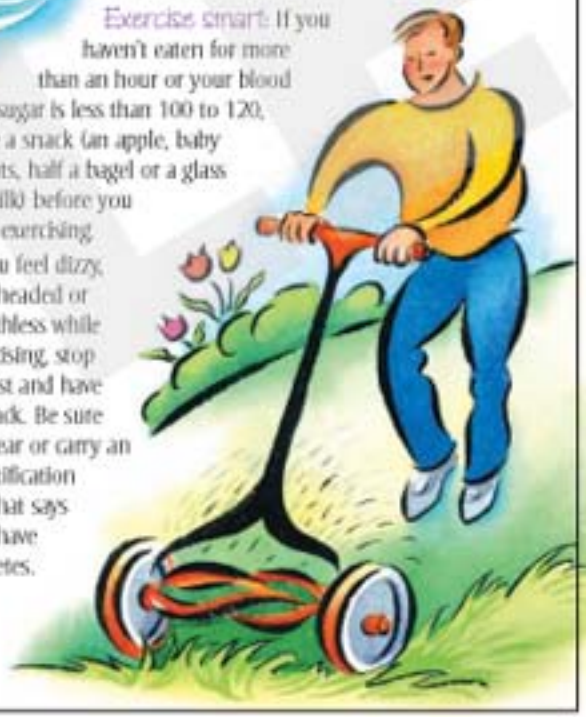
For people with type 2 diabetes, exercise helps control weight, regulate blood sugar and keep the heart and lungs healthy.

Exercise tips:

- Before you start an exercise program, talk to your doctor. He or she will check your heart, eyes, blood pressure and feet to make sure you don't have complications or special exercise needs.
- Exercise 4–5 times per week for 30 to 45 minutes. If you have not exercised for a long time, start out slowly and work up to a half-hour.
- Try walking, swimming, dancing or riding a bicycle. You can also exercise by bowling, cleaning house, mowing the lawn or working in the garden.
- If you have foot problems due to diabetes, try exercises that don't put pressure on your feet, such as pedaling a recumbent (reclining) bicycle or using a rowing machine. Water aerobics and swimming are also easy on the feet.
- For people with impaired vision, options might include pedaling a stationary bike, walking on a treadmill or being guided during partner dancing.

Exercise smart: If you haven't eaten for more than an hour or your blood sugar is less than 100 to 120, have a snack (an apple, baby carrots, half a bagel or a glass of milk) before you start exercising.

If you feel dizzy, lightheaded or breathless while exercising, stop to rest and have a snack. Be sure to wear or carry an identification tag that says you have diabetes.



DIET: What Can I Eat?

If you're living with diabetes, one of the best ways to control your weight and blood sugar is with a healthy diet. Instead of concentrating on what you can't have, try these tips for focusing on delicious and healthy foods.

ADD lemon juice or salsa to steamed vegetables for a zesty taste.

FILL up on crunchy salads.

TRY grilled or broiled chicken and fish with spicy or zingy fat-free marinades instead of fried foods.

SAMPLE soy. Chances are your local market stocks some "fake" meat products, such as veggie burgers, that cut out fat and calories without skimping on taste. Give it a try … you just might fool yourself.

EAT well, but pay attention to portion sizes.

Don't forget: Whether you've lost weight, kept your blood sugar within a healthy range for an entire month or quit smoking, you deserve a reward. Buy yourself a plant, see a movie or celebrate with friends. If you slip, don't punish yourself. Resolve to do better.

The Benefits of Controlling Diabetes

- You'll have more energy to do the things you love to do.
- You'll prevent symptoms such as exhaustion, thirst and frequent urination.
- You'll avoid complications such as eye, foot or kidney damage.
- You'll lower your risk of premature heart attack and heart disease.
- You'll control your weight, so you will look and feel better.

What Is Pre-Diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is having higher than normal glucose (blood sugar) levels that are not high enough to be considered diabetes. Pre-diabetes increases risk for diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Talk with your provider about having a blood glucose test. It could give you the chance to make changes now to prevent serious health problems later in life.