

Take Small Steps Now to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes

National Diabetes Education Program

Diabetes is a serious chronic disease that can be managed through life style changes and medication. Over 18 million Americans have diabetes, and another 41 million adults ages forty to seventy-four have pre-diabetes.

Diabetes means that your blood glucose (often called blood sugar) is too high. Your blood always has some glucose in it, because your body needs glucose for energy to keep you going. But too much glucose in the blood isn't good for your health.

Insulin is a substance made by the pancreas. The pancreas releases insulin into the blood. Insulin helps the glucose from food get into your cells. If your body doesn't make enough insulin or if the insulin doesn't work the way it should, glucose can't get into your cells. It stays in your blood instead. Your blood glucose level then gets too high, causing pre-diabetes or diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes. People can develop type 2 diabetes at any age—even during childhood. This form of diabetes usually begins with insulin resistance, a condition in which fat, muscle, and liver cells do not use insulin properly. At first, the pancreas keeps up with the added demand by producing more insulin. In time, however, it loses the ability to secrete enough insulin.

Taking a few small steps today to move more and eat healthier can deliver big rewards—like preventing or delaying type 2 diabetes.

About 40 percent of U.S. adults ages forty to seventy-four—or 41 million people—currently have pre-diabetes, a condition that raises a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Most people don't know that their age, weight, and ethnicity can put them at high risk for diabetes.

Studies show that African Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, American Indians, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are disproportionately affected by type 2 diabetes. People over age sixty are also at high risk. The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) responded to the diabetes epidemic by launching the first national multi-cultural diabetes prevention campaign: *Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent Type 2 Diabetes*. The campaign includes free tip sheets and posters that empower people at high risk for diabetes to make modest life style changes to lose a small amount of weight:

- **African Americans.** The *More Than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes* tip sheet include humorous but motivational tips with themes like "Less on your plate, Nate," "Eat a small meal, Lucille," and "Dance it away, Faye" to encourage healthy eating and increased physical activity.

- **Hispanics and Latinos.** The *Prevenemos la diabetes tipo 2. Paso a Paso* tip sheet encourages Spanish-speaking Americans to incorporate tips like taking the stairs, walking the dog, or mowing the lawn to prevent diabetes, step by step.

- **American Indians and Alaska Natives.** The *We Have the Power to Prevent Diabetes* tip sheet empowers American Indians and Alaska Natives to prevent diabetes with motivational tips and advice from real people in their community.

- **Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.** The *Two Reasons to Prevent Diabetes: My Future and Theirs* tip sheet, available in fifteen Asian and Pacific Islander languages, encourages people to prevent diabetes so that they can be around to spend more time with loved ones.

- **Older Adults.** The *It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes: Take Your First Step Today* tip sheet promotes the good news is that it's not too late to prevent type 2 diabetes for people over age sixty.

The Diabetes Prevention Program, a landmark study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, showed that people with pre-diabetes lowered their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by more than half by losing 5 to 7 percent of their body weight (that's about 10 to 15 pounds for a 200-pound person) by getting thirty minutes of physical activity five days a week and eating healthier.

You are at increased risk for pre-diabetes if you

- are over forty-five and overweight;
- are African American, Hispanic or Latino American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian American, or Pacific Islander;
- have given birth to at least one baby nine pounds or more or had gestational diabetes while pregnant;
- have been told that you have high blood pressure or your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher;
- have been told that your cholesterol and other fat (lipid) levels are high; or
- exercise less than three times a week.

If your healthcare provider has told you that you have pre-diabetes or that you are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes, the National Diabetes Education Program has free information to help you prevent or delay the disease, including the *Small Steps. Big Rewards. GAME PLAN* booklets and tip sheets in English, Spanish, and fifteen Asian languages. Call 1-800-438-5383 or visit the NDEP Web site at www.ndep.nih.gov for your free copies.