

# Are You at Risk for Diabetes?

## What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that cannot be cured but can be controlled. If you have diabetes, your body has problems using the energy from the foods that you eat. This energy comes from all foods, including carbohydrates (starches and sugars), proteins and fats.

After you eat, carbohydrates are turned into glucose (sugar) that is used by your cells for fuel. With type 2 diabetes, your body has trouble moving the glucose from your blood into your cells. This causes the glucose levels in your blood to rise.

People who have diabetes are at risk for serious complications such as:

- eye disease
- kidney disease
- nerve damage
- heart disease
- infections.

Diabetes treatments include healthy eating, exercise, close monitoring of blood glucose levels, regular health care appointments and medicines if needed. Treatment plans depend on the type of diabetes. Good care can prevent or reduce the severity of problems and complications.

## Risk Factors for Diabetes

If you do not have diabetes, you may be at risk for it. Personal risk factors include:

- a family history of diabetes (a parent or brother or sister has the disease)
- being overweight
- high blood pressure: 140 or higher (top number) or 90 or higher (bottom number)
- high cholesterol or high triglycerides
- inactivity (little or no regular exercise)
- gestational diabetes (having diabetes when pregnant).

Some ethnic groups are at higher risk for diabetes. These include African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics and Pacific Islanders.

## Signs and Symptoms of Diabetes

- increased thirst
- frequent urination
- less energy
- unexplained weight loss
- dry skin
- blurred vision
- hunger
- frequent yeast infections
- sores that do not heal
- numb hands and feet.

*(over)*

**It is important to know that some people have no symptoms of diabetes even though they have developed the disease.**

## **Diagnosing Diabetes**

Diabetes is not diagnosed by signs and symptoms. You must have a test to measure your blood glucose level to find out if you have diabetes.

If you think you might be at risk for or have signs of diabetes, ask your health care provider about a fasting blood glucose test for you. This is a simple blood test that takes only a few minutes.

## **Reducing Your Risk**

There are some easy steps you can take to reduce your risk of developing diabetes. Make the following healthy lifestyle choices:

### ■ **Get moving.**

Walking is an excellent exercise that requires only a good pair of shoes. Or, find something else that you will be willing to do on a regular basis. Whatever you choose, start gradually and work your way up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

### ■ **Lose weight if you need to.**

Even losing 5 to 10 pounds can reduce your risk of developing diabetes.

### ■ **Improve your diet.**

Eat a variety of healthful foods including:

- fruits
- vegetables
- whole grains
- fat-free or low-fat dairy
- lean protein such as fish, poultry without the skin, seafood and soy protein
- healthful fats such as olive oil, canola oil, nuts, seeds and avocado.

Avoid sugar sweetened beverages, limit processed foods and reduce portions sizes.

Visit [myplate.gov](https://myplate.gov) to learn about food groups, how much of each food group you should eat, and tips and resources.