

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); Use of this document does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, HHS, NIH, or NIDDK.

# Preventing Type 2 Diabetes

Perhaps you have learned that you have a high chance of developing [type 2 diabetes](#), the most common type of diabetes. You might be [overweight](#) or have a parent, brother, or sister with type 2 diabetes. Maybe you had gestational diabetes, which is diabetes that develops during pregnancy. These are just a few examples of [factors that can raise your chances of developing type 2 diabetes](#).

Diabetes can cause serious [health problems](#), such as heart disease, stroke, and eye and foot problems. [Prediabetes](#) also can cause health problems. The good news is that type 2 diabetes can be delayed or even prevented. The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to develop health problems, so delaying diabetes by even a few years will benefit your health. **You can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes by losing a modest amount of weight by following a reduced-calorie eating plan and being physically active most days of the week.** Ask your doctor if you should take the diabetes drug [metformin](#) [NIH](#) to help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

## How can I lower my chances of developing type 2 diabetes?

Research such as the [Diabetes Prevention Program](#) [NIH](#) shows that you can do a lot to reduce your chances of developing type 2 diabetes. Here are some things you can change to lower your risk:

- **Lose weight and keep it off.** You may be able to prevent or delay diabetes by losing 5 to 7 percent of your starting weight.<sup>1</sup> For instance, if you weigh 200 pounds, your goal would be to lose about 10 to 14 pounds.
- **Move more.** Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week. If you have not been active, talk with your health care professional about which activities are best. Start slowly to build up to your goal.

- **Eat healthy foods most of the time.** Eat smaller portions to reduce the amount of calories you eat each day and help you lose weight. Choosing foods with less fat is another way to reduce calories. Drink water instead of sweetened beverages.

Ask your health care professional about what other changes you can make to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

Most often, your best chance for preventing type 2 diabetes is to make lifestyle changes that work for you long term. Get started with [Your Game Plan to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes](#).


Losing weight through healthy eating and regular physical activity can help you prevent type 2 diabetes.

## What should I do if my health care professional told me I have prediabetes?


Prediabetes is when your [blood glucose](#), also called blood sugar, levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be called diabetes. Having prediabetes is serious because it raises your chance of developing type 2 diabetes. Many of the same factors that raise your chance of developing type 2 diabetes put you at risk for prediabetes.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); Use of this document does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, HHS, NIH, or NIDDK.

Other names for prediabetes include impaired fasting glucose or impaired glucose tolerance. Some people call prediabetes “borderline diabetes.”

About 1 in 3 Americans has prediabetes, according to recent [diabetes statistics](#)  from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. You won’t know if you have prediabetes unless you are tested.

If you have prediabetes, you can lower your chance of developing type 2 diabetes. Lose weight if you need to, become more physically active, and follow a reduced-calorie eating plan.

Get started with [Your Game Plan to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes](#). For more support, you can find a lifestyle change program near you through the [National Diabetes Prevention Program](#) .

Being physically active is one way to help prevent prediabetes from progressing to type 2 diabetes.

## If I had gestational diabetes when I was pregnant, how can I lower my chances of developing type 2

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); Use of this document does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, HHS, NIH, or NIDDK.

# diabetes?

[Gestational diabetes](#) is a type of diabetes that develops during pregnancy. Most of the time, gestational diabetes goes away after your baby is born. Even if your gestational diabetes goes away, you still have a greater chance of developing type 2 diabetes within 5 to 10 years. Your child may also be more likely to become [obese](#) and develop type 2 diabetes later in life. Making healthy choices helps the whole family and may protect your child from becoming obese or developing diabetes.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); Use of this document does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, HHS, NIH, or NIDDK.

Being physically active together is a great way to lower your own and your child's chance of developing type 2 diabetes.

Here are steps you should take for yourself and your child if you had gestational diabetes:

- Get tested for diabetes 6 to 12 weeks after your baby is born. If your blood glucose is still high, you may have type 2 diabetes. If your blood glucose is normal, you should get tested every 3 years to see if you have developed type 2 diabetes.
- Be more active and make healthy food choices to get back to a healthy weight.
- Breastfeed your baby. Breastfeeding gives your baby the right balance of nutrients and helps you burn calories.
- Ask your doctor if you should take the diabetes drug metformin to help prevent type 2 diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

## References

[1] Diabetes Prevention Program Research Group. Long-term effects of lifestyle intervention or metformin on diabetes development and microvascular complications over 15-year follow-up: the Diabetes Prevention Program Outcomes Study. *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology*. 2015;3(11):866–875. You can find more information about this study at the [Diabetes Prevention Program Outcomes Study website](#).

**December 2016**

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); Use of this document does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, HHS, NIH, or NIDDK.

 **Previous:**  
Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes

**Next:**   
Diabetes Tests & Diagnosis

This content is provided as a service of the [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases](#) (NIDDK), part of the National Institutes of Health. The NIDDK translates and disseminates research findings to increase knowledge and understanding about health and disease among patients, health professionals, and the public. Content produced by the NIDDK is carefully reviewed by NIDDK scientists and other experts.

## Contact Us

---

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases  
Health Information Center

**Phone:** 1-800-860-8747

**Email:** [healthinfo@niddk.nih.gov](mailto:healthinfo@niddk.nih.gov)

**TTY:** 1-866-569-1162

**Hours:** 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time, M-F

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); Use of this document does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, HHS, NIH, or NIDDK.