

Understanding Type 2 Diabetes

What Is This Condition?

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic condition that affects the way your body processes blood sugar (glucose). With type 2 diabetes, your body either resists the effects of insulin — a hormone that regulates the movement of sugar into your cells — or doesn't produce enough insulin to maintain normal glucose levels.

What Causes It?

Type 2 diabetes develops when the body becomes resistant to insulin or when the pancreas is unable to produce enough insulin. Excess weight and inactivity are important factors. Risk factors include family history, age over 45, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels, and history of gestational diabetes.

Common Signs and Symptoms

- Increased thirst and frequent urination
- Increased hunger
- Unintended weight loss
- Fatigue and weakness
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing sores or frequent infections
- Darkened skin areas (often in armpits and neck)
- Numbness or tingling in hands or feet

Treatment Options

- Blood glucose monitoring

- Oral medications (like metformin)
- Insulin therapy if needed
- Healthy eating plan
- Regular physical activity
- Weight management
- Regular medical check-ups

Self-Care Tips

- Check your blood sugar as directed by your healthcare provider
- Take all medications exactly as prescribed
- Keep a log of your blood sugar readings, meals, and activities
- Examine your feet daily for cuts, blisters, or sores
- Attend all scheduled medical appointments
- Wear medical identification (bracelet or necklace)
- Carry glucose tablets or candy for low blood sugar episodes

Lifestyle Changes That Can Help

- Lose weight if overweight (even 5-10% weight loss helps)
- Get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week
- Include strength training 2-3 times per week
- Quit smoking
- Limit alcohol intake
- Manage stress through relaxation techniques
- Get 7-9 hours of sleep per night

Diet and Nutrition

Focus on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Limit foods high in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Count carbohydrates and space them evenly throughout the day. Work with a registered dietitian to create a personalized meal plan. Use the plate method: fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables, one quarter with lean protein, and one quarter with carbohydrates.

Physical Activity

Aim for 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity (like brisk walking) most days of the week, totaling at least 150 minutes weekly. Include strength training exercises at least twice a week. Always check your blood sugar before and after exercise. Carry a snack in case of low blood sugar during activity. Stay hydrated and wear proper footwear.

- Blood sugar consistently over 180 mg/dL after meals
- Blood sugar under 70 mg/dL (hypoglycemia)
- Ketones in urine
- Persistent symptoms despite medication
- New or worsening vision problems
- Foot sores that won't heal
- Frequent infections

- Blood sugar over 400 mg/dL
- Severe hypoglycemia with confusion or unconsciousness
- Fruity-smelling breath

- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- Severe abdominal pain
- Extreme weakness or fatigue
- Loss of consciousness

Support and Resources

- American Diabetes Association local chapters
- JDRF (Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation) support groups
- Hospital-based diabetes education programs
- Online communities and forums

Additional Resources

- American Diabetes Association: www.diabetes.org
- CDC Diabetes Resources: www.cdc.gov/diabetes
- National Institute of Diabetes: www.niddk.nih.gov
- Diabetes Self-Management magazine
- MySugr app for tracking blood sugar
- Glucose Buddy app

Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

- What is my target blood sugar range?
- How often should I check my blood sugar?
- What medications do I need and when should I take them?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of medication?

- How do I recognize and treat low blood sugar?
- What lifestyle changes should I make?
- How often should I have eye exams and foot checks?
- When should I call you or go to the emergency room?
- Should I see a diabetes educator or dietitian?
- What are my A1C goals and when should it be checked?

Information Sources

This guide was compiled using information from: MedlinePlus (NIH), American Diabetes Association, User-provided information

*This document is for educational purposes only and does not replace professional medical advice. Always consult with your healthcare provider for medical questions or concerns.
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