

Prediabetes

What is prediabetes?

Prediabetes is a term that is used when you are at risk for type 2 diabetes. It means that your blood sugar is higher than it should be. Most people who get type 2 diabetes have prediabetes first. The good news is that lifestyle changes may help you get your blood sugar back to normal and avoid or delay diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is a lifelong disease that happens when the pancreas can't make enough insulin and/or the body's tissues can't use insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone that helps the body's cells use sugar (glucose) for energy. It also helps the body store extra sugar in muscle, fat, and liver cells.

Without insulin, the sugar can't get into the cells to do its work. It stays in the blood instead. This can cause high blood sugar levels. A person has diabetes when the blood sugar stays too high too much of the time.

Over time, high blood sugar can cause serious problems with the eyes, heart, blood vessels, nerves, and kidneys. High blood sugar also makes a person more likely to get serious illnesses or infections.

What causes prediabetes?

Doctors don't know exactly what causes prediabetes. People who are overweight, aren't physically active, and have a family history of diabetes are more likely to get prediabetes. Women who have had gestational diabetes are also more likely to get prediabetes.

What are the symptoms?

Most people with prediabetes don't have any symptoms. But if you have prediabetes, you need to watch for signs of diabetes, such as:

- Feeling very thirsty.
- Urinating more often than usual.
- Feeling very hungry.
- Having blurred vision.
- Losing weight without trying.

How is prediabetes diagnosed?

A blood test can tell if you have prediabetes. You have prediabetes if:

- The results of your hemoglobin A1c test are 5.7% to 6.4%.
- The results of your fasting blood glucose test are between 100 and 125 milligrams per deciliter.
- The results of your oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) are 140 to 199 mg/dL (2 hours after the beginning of the test).

How is it treated?

The key to treating prediabetes and preventing type 2 diabetes is getting your blood sugar levels back to a normal range. You can do this by making some lifestyle changes.

- **Watch your weight.** If you are overweight, losing just a small amount of weight may help. Reducing fat around your waist is particularly important.
- **Make healthy food choices.**
 - Limit how much fat you eat, and try to eat foods that are high in fiber.
 - Try to eat about the same amount of carbohydrate at each meal. This helps keep your blood sugar steady. Carbohydrate affects blood sugar more than other nutrients. It is found in sugar and sweets, grains, fruit, starchy vegetables, and milk and yogurt.
 - Talk to your doctor, a diabetes educator, or a dietitian about an eating plan that will work for you. There are many ways to manage how much and when you eat.
- **Be active.** You can do moderate activity, vigorous activity, or both. Bit by bit, increase the amount you do every day. You may want to swim, bike, or do other activities. Walking is an easy way to get exercise.

Making these changes may help delay or prevent diabetes. You may also avoid or delay some of the serious problems that you can get when you have diabetes, such as heart attack, stroke, and heart, eye, nerve, and kidney disease.

Some doctors may use medicine to control blood sugar in people with prediabetes. If your doctor prescribed medicine to help control your blood sugar, take it as prescribed.

Can prediabetes be prevented?

Staying at a healthy weight, eating healthy foods, and getting regular exercise can help prevent prediabetes.