

# Could You Be at Risk for Diabetes?

**Learn how to reduce your chances of developing this serious disease.**

Nearly 21 million Americans have diabetes. Two thirds of them have been diagnosed. That leaves one third (or about seven million people) who don't yet know that they have diabetes. Could you be one of them?

Diabetes can lead to serious problems, such as kidney failure, blindness and heart disease. Some of these problems can be prevented, but only if the disease is diagnosed and treated.

Don't wait for symptoms. Type 2 diabetes may not cause any noticeable symptoms for years. All too often, people only learn they have diabetes when they develop a major complication, such as kidney disease, heart attack or stroke.

If you could be at risk, get tested so you can take steps to slow or stop the damage that diabetes can cause.

## **Am I at risk?**

A number of factors increase your risk of developing diabetes. You're more likely to get diabetes if:

- You are overweight
- You are 45 or older
- You have a parent, brother or sister who has diabetes
- You are African American, Native American, Latino, Asian American or Pacific Islander
- You have high blood pressure (140/90 or higher)
- You have a cholesterol problem, such as low "good" HDL cholesterol (35 or lower) or high triglycerides (250 or more)
- You don't get much exercise (less than three times a week)
- You had gestational diabetes or gave birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds

The more of these risk factors you have, the greater your chance of developing diabetes.

## **What should I do?**

If you have any risk factors, talk to your doctor about being tested. A simple blood test can tell if you have diabetes. In most cases, experts recommend a fasting plasma glucose (FPG) test. This test is done after you've had nothing to eat or drink for at least eight hours.

In the meantime, you can start taking steps right away to lower your risk of diabetes:

- **Lose some weight** if you're overweight. Even losing five to seven percent of your weight can make a real difference. For a 200-pound person, that's just 10 to 14 pounds.
- **Eat a healthy diet** that's low in fat and salt and rich in whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables, and lean protein. Need help getting started? Talk to a dietitian, or try following the DASH diet, which is proven to lower blood pressure.
- **Get some exercise** at least five days a week. If you haven't been active, start slow and work up to 30 minutes a day. Always talk to your doctor before increasing your activity level.

These steps will not only lower your risk of diabetes, they can also help you get your blood pressure and cholesterol under control. And you may find you feel a lot better, too.