

Good to Know

Information from the American Diabetes Association for people with diabetes

What is Prediabetes?

Understanding the warning signs—and how to stay healthy

What is it?

Prediabetes means that your body is showing signs that could lead to type 2 diabetes. People with type 2 diabetes have too much glucose (a kind of sugar) in their blood, which can lead to serious health problems. In prediabetes, there is too much glucose in the blood, but not as much as in diabetes.

How do I know if I have it?

People with prediabetes often have no symptoms at all. Your health care provider may decide to test you for prediabetes because of your age, weight, family history of diabetes, ethnicity, history of diabetes in pregnancy (gestational diabetes), or other health factors. Three different blood tests may be used to look for prediabetes: fasting plasma glucose (FPG), oral glucose tolerance test, or A1C. Each of these measures glucose in the blood in a different way.

How can I stay healthy?

Here's the good news: Studies show that it is often possible for people with prediabetes to prevent or delay diabetes. Your health care provider should suggest the best steps for you to take. There are four main ways people with prediabetes can manage their condition:

- **Eating well.** Talk to a dietitian about what you are eating right now. Some people find it helpful to keep a food diary for a few days or a week, writing down everything they eat, and then sharing that with a health care provider. Then together you can come up with an eating plan that is right for you. In general, a healthy diet for people with prediabetes is a healthy diet for anyone: rich in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, with lean proteins and certain kinds of fat.

Although you may have to cut back on certain foods you are used to eating, you will still be able to enjoy them occasionally.

- **Getting active.** Exercise of any kind can make a big difference in your health. If you're currently not moving around a lot, even just taking a walk around the block can help as a start. Adding a little more movement week by week can be as easy as taking the stairs instead of the elevator at work, walking your dog a bit farther than usual (or offering to walk a neighbor's dog), or joining a pal for a 20-minute lunchtime walk. Remember, exercise doesn't have to happen in a gym!
- **Weight loss.** Even a small amount of weight loss can make a big difference when it comes to prediabetes. Sometimes as few as 10 or 15 pounds is all you need to lose. Changing how you eat and getting active may help you shed extra weight.
- **Medications.** For some people with prediabetes, medications are prescribed—usually a diabetes pill called metformin, which can help lower blood glucose. The pill is used along with the healthy eating and exercise mentioned above.

Will I get diabetes?

Not everyone with prediabetes will get diabetes, but many will, especially if they don't make lifestyle changes. Still, even if you do everything your health care provider recommends, you still may develop diabetes down the road. This does not mean you have failed. And, thanks to what you have learned from caring for your prediabetes, you will have a head start in managing your diabetes.