

## Dealing with your type 2 diabetes diagnosis



### Your type 2 diabetes diagnosis

You may be feeling perfectly fine when your doctor calls with the results from your most recent physical and tells you that you have hyperglycemia, meaning your blood glucose levels have reached 126 milligrams per deciliter (a measurement meaning 1/10 of liter) or higher. To ensure your levels are consistent, your doctor will probably ask you to retest. If the results are the same, you have [type 2 diabetes](#).

After you take some time to [process your diagnosis and what it means](#), it's important to ask yourself, "What is this disease and how can I best manage it?"

### What is type 2 diabetes?

Unlike type 1 diabetes, where your pancreas doesn't produce insulin (a hormone that controls your blood sugar) at all, in type 2 diabetes, your body develops something called insulin resistance, which means your cells don't respond normally to insulin, and thus your pancreas makes more insulin trying to get them to respond. Over time, this results in high blood glucose levels.

Sometimes, type 2 diabetes has no symptoms. Other times, warning signs can include:

- Urinating often
- Feeling very thirsty
- Extreme fatigue
- Blurry vision
- Cuts/bruises that are slow to heal
- Tingling, pain or numbness in the hands/feet

### You and 38 million Americans

[You are not alone in your diagnosis](#): about 38 million Americans ([one in ten](#)) have the disease. It most often develops in people who are 45 or over (more men than women) but more and more children and teens are diagnosed with it, as well.

### Some of the [risk factors](#) for type 2 diabetes are:

- ⓘ **Being overweight.** When you carry excess weight, especially around the abdomen, the cells in your body become less sensitive to the insulin produced by your pancreas. There is even some evidence that fat cells are more resistant to insulin than muscle cells.
- ⓘ **Being 45 or over.** There are several reasons why age is a factor in type 2 diabetes. You could have diabetes for years and not know it (or be prediabetic) and only notice the symptoms once you are over 45. Type 2 diabetes can also create complications more quickly when you're older. These complications could be more serious because you may have other health issues (such as heart disease) that may be aggravated by diabetes.
- ⓘ **Genetics.** Having a biological parent or sibling with type 2 means you are two to six times more likely to get the disease. If you are of South Asian, African, Caribbean or Black American descent you are two to four times more likely to develop type 2.

# 5 Steps to manage your type 2 diabetes

Managing type 2 diabetes usually means changing your routine, which can be difficult. However, even small changes can have a significant effect on your overall health.

Here are some important steps you can take to begin managing your diabetes:

## 1 Meet with your primary care doctor.

They can explain what type 2 diabetes is and create a treatment plan for you. It's important to ask questions about anything you may not understand (sometimes bringing a loved one along with a list helps!). Your doctor may also refer you to an endocrinologist, a physician who specializes in treating the disease.

## 2 Monitor your blood sugar.

Your new routine will mean testing your blood sugar every day. Your doctor may recommend that you monitor your blood glucose by pricking your thumb and dabbing it on a test strip. Continuous glucose monitors (wearable devices inserted under your skin) are another option for people with uncontrollable episodes of hypoglycemia or brittle diabetes (diabetes that is especially difficult to manage).

## 3 Take medication.

Not everyone who has type 2 diabetes needs to take medication. Your doctor may first advise a diet and exercise program to help you lose weight and manage your blood glucose. But in other cases, medication will be an important part of your treatment plan. Many different types of drugs can be used to treat diabetes, and determining which is the right one will depend on your unique clinical needs. Common medications could include metformin, which improves your body's sensitivity to insulin, oral or injected insulin, or GLP-1 receptor agonists, which can help you lose significant amounts of body fat. However, as all drugs have potential side effects, please discuss them with your doctor.

## 4 Adjust your diet and exercise.

Type 2 diabetes can't be cured, but it is possible to revert to normal blood sugar levels—what is considered diabetic remission—through diet, exercise and weight loss. This means high fiber fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, healthy fats such as those found in avocados and certain nuts, drinking plenty of water and keeping carbohydrate consumption to a minimum. On the exercise front, the American Diabetes Association recommends a minimum of [150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise](#) a week. Whether you're walking, running, biking or swimming, start small, exercise with a friend if you can and build up your endurance. If you keep it up, you'll have more energy, sleep better and gradually begin to lose weight.

## 5 Take your diagnosis seriously.

Very often, people are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes before any serious symptoms set in, so it may not feel like anything is wrong. But untreated type 2 diabetes can lead to heart disease, neuropathy, complications with your eyesight, kidney disease and hearing impairment. Poorly managed or untreated high blood sugar can even raise the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other conditions that cause dementia. That's why it's so important to control your blood sugar, eat healthy and exercise regularly to ensure you're living your best possible life with type 2 diabetes.

**Sources:** <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/21501-type-2-diabetes> | <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/about/about-type-2-diabetes.html> | <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/signs-symptoms/coping-with-type-2-diagnosis.html> | <https://insights.ibx.com/five-things-to-do-after-a-type-2-diabetes-diagnosis> | <https://www.healthline.com/health/type-2-diabetes/treatment-newly-diagnosed#weight-loss> | <https://diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/newly-diagnosed> | <https://diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/newly-diagnosed/where-do-i-start-with-type-2> | <https://beyondtype1.org/type-2-diabetes>

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