



## Paying attention to prediabetes

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### A silent forerunner

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 98 million American adults (one in three) can be classified as prediabetic, meaning their blood sugar levels are higher than normal, although not high enough to be classified as type 2 diabetes. A disturbing finding from JAMA Pediatrics, an American Medical Association publication that focuses on children and teenagers, shows that the overall rate of prediabetes in young people ages 12 to 19 has more than doubled since 2002.

The bad news is that 80% of people with prediabetes don't realize they have it until it becomes type 2 diabetes. The good news is that early treatment (simple bloodwork tests combined with lifestyle changes and sometimes medication) can restore glucose levels to close to normal and delay or entirely prevent full-blown type 2 diabetes.

### What causes prediabetes?

Unlike type 1 diabetes, where the body produces little to no insulin, type 2 diabetes is a disease of insulin resistance. The pancreas produces insulin but the system can't use it properly, which leads to high blood glucose levels. If you have prediabetes, you may have the beginnings of the heart disease or kidney damage high blood sugar can cause. **The danger is that you may not know it or you may mistake the symptoms (such as frequent urination) for something else.**

#### You are at risk for prediabetes if you:

- Have a family history of type 2 diabetes
- Are over the age of 40
- Are overweight—even as little as 10 to 15 pounds
- Have high blood pressure
- Have had gestational diabetes
- Are Hispanic, African American, Asian or Native American

None of the above means you will become prediabetic, but it might be wise to bring up the topic with your physician to see if you need to be tested.



### Testing for prediabetes

If your doctor thinks getting tested for prediabetes is a good idea, these are the three main tests that might be ordered:

**An A1C blood test**, which measures your blood sugar over the past two to three months and is an easy test to take because you don't have to fast beforehand. A result in the range of 5.7%-6.4% indicates prediabetes. (6.5% or higher usually indicates type 2 diabetes.)

**A fasting blood sugar test**, which measures blood sugar after you've been fasting overnight. A result in the range of 100-125 mg/dl means you have prediabetes.

**An oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT)**. This measures blood sugar before and after drinking a glucose liquid, which gives an immediate snapshot of your glucose levels. A result of 140-199 mg/dl indicates prediabetes. This test is generally used if the A1C results are unclear/borderline or if a doctor suspects gestational diabetes.

## So you have prediabetes. What to do now?

You may not believe it, but if your doctor tells you after testing that you have prediabetes, you're actually one of the lucky ones. Many people in the U.S. do not get tested and are not given this opportunity to work on their health in ways that can not only lower blood sugar levels to avoid type 2 diabetes, but also make your body healthier in general.

### What steps can you take when diagnosed with prediabetes?

#### Lose weight.

Losing even a relatively small amount of weight can help you bring your blood sugar levels down. The CDC's national Diabetes Prevention Program has a study that shows a 200-pound person losing even 10 to 15 pounds, along with making other lifestyle changes, can cut their risk of developing type 2 by 58%.

#### Change your diet.

In order to avoid oversnacking, make snacks ahead of time and place them in airtight containers. Avoid eating directly out of snack bags or boxes.

#### Exercise.

Physical activity is extraordinarily important when it comes to keeping your blood sugar under control. Try to exercise at least 150 minutes a week, whether it's walking, running, biking, swimming, or exercise classes. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

#### Sleep.

Studies have shown that poor sleeping habits actually increase people's craving for sugary foods, so it's important to try to get seven or eight hours of sleep every night. For many people with sleep issues, this can be easier said than done, so be sure to talk to your doctor if difficulty persists.

#### Take medication.

Your doctor may prescribe forms of oral diabetes medication to help regulate your blood sugar. These can include Metformin, which helps lower glucose production, or Acarbose, which breaks down carbs to slow the release of sugar into the bloodstream. As they have recently with type 2 diabetes, GLP-1 receptor agonists can also help with weight loss.

## A final note

The word "pre" in prediabetes can fool people into believing it is not a serious health condition, but just because you are not feeling the effects of changes in your glucose levels just yet doesn't mean you won't. Remember that prediabetes is much easier to manage than full-blown type 2 diabetes, so please don't ignore or downplay your prediabetes diagnosis. Make the lifestyle changes needed and work closely with your doctor and you'll stay on the road to good health.

**Sources:** <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/communication-resources/1-in-3-americans.html> | <https://diabetes.org/about-diabetes/statistics/about-diabetes> | <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/prediabetes> | <https://www.ama-assn.org/public-health/prevention-wellness/prediabetes-doesn-t-only-affect-adults-kids-are-impacted-too> | [https://doihaveprediabetes.org/faq/prediabetes?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=21915605436&gbraid=0AAAAAD5IQ44q-jobggudVAIRs64poCM-hk&gclid=CjwKCAIAmePKBhAFiwAU3Ko3CDIuN6qURxgkDZbJJO-nmfbxAKit-6QXMIBoEd7Si-zho6pysPnM2BoC-GoQAvD\\_BwE](https://doihaveprediabetes.org/faq/prediabetes?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21915605436&gbraid=0AAAAAD5IQ44q-jobggudVAIRs64poCM-hk&gclid=CjwKCAIAmePKBhAFiwAU3Ko3CDIuN6qURxgkDZbJJO-nmfbxAKit-6QXMIBoEd7Si-zho6pysPnM2BoC-GoQAvD_BwE) | <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diagnostics/9731-a1c>



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