

Tips to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic medical condition that occurs when your body is unable to properly process and regulate glucose. More than 95% of people with diabetes have type 2 diabetes, and when left untreated, the disease can lead to blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, and a host of other health problems.

While certain risk factors, such as genetics and aging, cannot be changed, there are many lifestyle choices and dietary modifications that can help prevent type 2 diabetes.



- **Reduce your total carbohydrate intake.** Eating foods high in refined carbohydrates and sugar increases blood sugar and insulin levels, which may eventually progress into diabetes. Limiting foods high in added sugars and refined carbs—like soda, candy, white bread, and sweetened breakfast cereal—while incorporating more foods high in fiber and lean protein—like non-starchy vegetables, whole fruit, oatmeal, whole grain pasta, olive oil, avocado, nuts, and seeds—can help mitigate your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity increases the insulin sensitivity of your body's cells—making it so you need less insulin to regulate your blood sugar and ultimately helping prevent diabetes. Aim for around 150 minutes of exercise per week, but remember, any activity is better than none!
- **Make water your beverage of choice.** Drinking water in place of sugary beverages, like soda and juice, helps manage blood sugar and insulin levels and decreases your overall risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Next time you're thirsty, reach for water!
- **Lose excess weight.** Carrying extra weight—especially abdominal weight—is associated with insulin resistance and increases the risk of type 2 diabetes. However, losing even a small amount of weight—as little as 5-7% of your body weight—may help lower your risk of diabetes if you have prediabetes or are overweight or obese.
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking is known to cause or contribute to many serious health problems, including type 2 diabetes. Smoking is suspected to increase insulin resistance and inhibit insulin secretion. Quitting—no matter how long you've been a smoker—has been shown to reduce diabetes risk.
- **Eat smaller portions.** Avoiding eating large portions of food may help reduce blood sugar and insulin levels, promote weight loss, and decrease the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. You can help manage your portion sizes by filling your plate half with non-starchy vegetables, one quarter with lean protein, and one quarter with complex carbs (e.g., fruit, whole grains).

- **Avoid sedentary behaviors.** Prolonged sitting and getting very little physical activity have been linked to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Make it a priority to get up and move often; try setting a timer to walk a few minutes every half hour, standing up while talking on the phone, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
- **Increase your fiber consumption.** Eating a diet high in fiber is beneficial for gut health, weight management, and reducing diabetes risk. Including a source of fiber in every meal may help prevent spikes in blood sugar and insulin levels. Consider regularly serving high-fiber foods such as avocados, pears, raspberries, artichokes, lentils, kidney beans, oats, almonds, and chia seeds.
- **Incorporate vitamin D into your diet.** Studies have linked vitamin D deficiency to insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Eating foods high in vitamin D can help optimize your vitamin D levels. Good sources include fatty fish—like salmon, herring, sardines, and tuna—as well as egg yolks, mushrooms, and vitamin d fortified milk, cereal and oatmeal.
- **Minimize eating highly processed foods.** While processed foods are not inherently unhealthy, many highly processed foods (e.g., hot dogs, potato chips, frozen desserts, soda, chocolate bars) contain added sugars, unhealthy fats, and chemical preservatives. Trading in highly processed foods for whole foods—like nuts, vegetables, and fruit—may help decrease your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Sources: Healthline ([healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)), World Health Organization ([who.int](https://www.who.int))