

Step toward prevention

That first step toward a healthier lifestyle can seem daunting. But it can also bring big rewards—especially if you're at high risk for type 2 diabetes. A few small changes can help you delay or even prevent this serious disease.

What is diabetes? When we eat, our bodies turn food into glucose, or sugar, which is then converted to energy with the help of a hormone called insulin.

When you have type 2 diabetes, your body either doesn't produce enough insulin or it doesn't process the hormone properly and your blood glucose level remains too high.

Over time, a high blood glucose level can damage nerves and blood vessels. Diabetes is also linked to other serious health problems, such as heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.

You may be at risk if you:

- Are 45 or older
- Have a parent or sibling with diabetes
- Are overweight or obese
- Have high blood pressure

- Have a blood glucose level that is higher than normal
- Are not very active

Can I lower my risk? Two of the best ways to reduce your risk of getting diabetes are to eat a healthy diet and be active. In fact, diet and exercise have been shown to be more effective than medication in delaying the onset of diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association.

Losing a few extra pounds (if you're overweight) can also help.

Here are some ideas that can help lower your risk of developing diabetes:

Make a move. Just 30 minutes of activity every day can help. And it doesn't have to be at a gym. Ditch the elevator and take the stairs instead. Play with your kids, or go for a walk.

Select the best. Choose nonfat or low-fat foods for meals and snacks. Stick to whole-grain breads and cereals, lean meats, and fish. Try working more fruits and vegetables into your diet.

A few minutes here, a few pounds there—all these small steps can add up to create a big reward: a life without diabetes.



DIVERT DIABETES:
Controlling your risk for diabetes can decrease your chance of developing metabolic syndrome.