

Are you at Risk of Type 2 Diabetes?

Who is at increased risk?

The following factors may suggest a higher risk of type 2 diabetes in later life.

- Ethnic origin - South Asian descent
- immediate family member with type 2 diabetes (mother, father, brother or sister)
- A history of gestational diabetes
- Sedentary lifestyle - Inactive and exercise less than twice a week
- overweight individuals
- high blood pressure (greater than 140/90 mm/Hg)

Can it be prevented?

Whether diabetes mellitus is preventable has been a vexed question for many years. In recent years, two major studies have shown reasons for optimism.

The Diabetes Prevention Program was a large American study of over 3,000 people at high risk for diabetes. The results showed that diet and exercise which yielded a 5-7% weight loss

can delay and even prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes.

People who participated in this research study were overweight and had higher than normal levels of blood glucose, though not diabetes. This is referred to as 'pre-diabetes' in the United States (impaired glucose tolerance). Pre-diabetes and obesity are considered strong risk factors for type 2 diabetes. Because of the high risk among some minority groups, about half of the participants were from ethnic minorities.

The study tested the effects of lifestyle changes (healthy diet and exercise), and the influence of the diabetes drug metformin. The results showed that the group of people who changed their lifestyle, reduced their risk of getting type 2 diabetes by 58 percent. People who took metformin reduced their risk by 31 percent.

How do I reduce my risk?

- Regular aerobic exercise
- reduce your intake of fat as well as your total caloric intake
- ask your doctor to advise you on your ideal body weight. If overweight, attempt to lose weight to this level and maintain your ideal weight.
- Maintain a lifestyle that is active. For example walk or cycle to work; when at work take the stairs rather than use the lifts.
- Improve your general health by keeping your cholesterol and blood pressure normal. Avoid smoking.

What is pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes is a term in vogue in the United States, but is not in common usage here in the UK. It means that you are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes (and heart disease). Recent evidence which suggests that you can reduce your risk of getting type 2 diabetes by modest weight loss and physical exercise has led to the 'labelling' of certain people at risk as having 'pre-diabetes'.

Tips for increasing your physical activity:

- walk or cycle to work if at all possible
- take the stairs rather than use the lifts at work
- keep a record of your physical activity. If you are in a sedentary job, you will be surprised at how little exertion you have through an average day!

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