

National Diabetes Month

This is National Diabetes Month, a time to raise awareness for this chronic health condition that occurs when the body's blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high and insulin is limited. The most common type of diabetes, Type 2, occurs most often in people age 45 and older; and one in four Americans are estimated to have the disease. Over time, having too much sugar in the blood can cause numerous health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, nerve damage and eye problems.

There are numerous lifestyle changes that can be made to delay or prevent Type 2 diabetes and related diseases from occurring. And while there is not yet a cure for diabetes, older adults who have it can take steps to manage it over time and stay healthy.

Preventing Type 2 Diabetes

About 90% of older Americans with diabetes have Type 2, and the chances of developing it depend on a combination of genes and lifestyle. Although risk factors such as family history, age or ethnicity cannot be changed, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) says these lifestyle changes can help to delay or even prevent Type 2 diabetes:

- **Weight loss and management.** Older adults who are overweight or obese are more likely to have insulin resistance and develop Type 2 diabetes but may be able to prevent or delay it by losing 5-7% of their starting weight. For instance, if a person weighs 200 pounds, the goal would be to lose about 10 to 14 pounds.
- **Eating healthy foods most of the time.** Choosing foods with less fat, opting for water instead of sweetened beverages and eating smaller portions and more slowly can reduce caloric intake and help maintain a good weight or help with

a weight loss program.

- **More physical activity.** Physical inactivity is one of the largest risk factors for Type 2 diabetes in older adults. Older adults should get at least 30 minutes of physical activity, three to five days a week. Talk with your Care N' Care doctor about which activities are best for you, and how frequent, and what other changes you can make to prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes.

Managing Type 2 Diabetes

For older adults who have Type 2 diabetes, NIDDK suggests managing it with the diabetes ABCs:

- **A for the A1C test.** The A1C test shows your average blood glucose level over the past three months. The A1C goal for many people with diabetes is below 7%.
- **B for blood pressure.** The blood pressure goal for most people with diabetes is below 140/90 mm Hg.
- **C for cholesterol.** You have two kinds of cholesterol in your blood: LDL and HDL. LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, can build up and clog your blood vessels and can cause a heart attack or stroke. HDL, or "good" cholesterol, helps remove the "bad" cholesterol from your blood vessels.
- **S for stop smoking:** Nobody should smoke, but smoking is especially important for people with diabetes because both smoking and diabetes narrow blood vessels.

Some people with Type 2 diabetes can manage their disease by making these lifestyle changes. However, many people with Type 2 will require diabetes medicines, such as diabetes pills or medicines injected under the skin such as insulin. If you have diabetes or are experiencing symptoms of diabetes such as sudden weight loss and fatigue, talk to your Care N' Care doctor about management, prevention and next steps.

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