

# Type 2 diabetes: Your risks

It's no secret that our nation has a weight problem. The climbing rates of obesity and weight-related diseases are among the most frequently discussed topics by news media, health organizations, employers, schools and families. Despite its prominent position in national health conversations, as our nation's obesity epidemic has grown, so has the number of people with diabetes.



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Diabetes doesn't happen overnight. A person with a diabetes diagnosis has exhibited warning signs for up to 10 years. This warning period before a diabetes diagnosis is known as prediabetes — and an incredible 57 million people age 20 or older in the United States fall into this category.

The main culprit for prediabetes is being overweight. According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 65 percent of U.S. adults are overweight or obese. Being obese increases the risk not only of diabetes, but also heart disease, stroke, arthritis and cancer.

Prediabetes means that a person exhibits all the risk factors for

developing diabetes: being overweight or obese, and exhibiting elevated blood glucose levels (between 100 and 125 mg/dl).

If you are 45 years old or older, overweight and inactive, your doctor may recommend a test for prediabetes. Even if you are under 45, it's a good idea to be tested if you have other risk factors: low levels of HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood pressure or a family history of diabetes (see related sidebar), or you are a member of an ethnic or minority group with increased risk (African American, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic or Pacific Islander).

Historically, Type II diabetes has been an adult disease, but the fastest-growing group exhibiting signs of diabetes — and prediabetes — are children and teens.

Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 years increased from 6.5 percent in 1980 to 19.6 percent in 2008, and among adolescents aged 12 to 19 years, from 5 to 18.1 percent in the same time period.

The silver lining is that a prediabetes diagnosis doesn't mean diabetes is inevitable; in fact, it can be a valuable wakeup call. By making changes in nutrition and

lifestyle habits — even if you already are prediabetic — you can actually reverse the disease and put off developing full-blown diabetes — and in some cases, prevent diabetes entirely. Losing just 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can delay or prevent the onset of diabetes, reducing your risk of developing diabetes by nearly 60 percent, according to the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), a study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

You can reduce your risk of diabetes with some simple lifestyle modifications:

Get a blood glucose test. If your blood glucose levels are in the normal range, you should be re-checked every three years. If you have prediabetes, get test for type 2 diabetes every one to two years after your diagnosis.

Lose weight. Just a modest amount of weight loss (5-10 percent of total body weight) can reduce your risk of developing diabetes by 60 to 70 percent, according to the DPP study.

Eat healthy. A nutritious diet will help with weight loss and other diabetes risk factors, such as high cholesterol. You may want to consult with a nutritionist who can help design a healthy eating plan with appropriate calorie and fat intake for your goals.

Exercise. If you're not already active, a modest

## Healthy Woman events set this week at SMMC

Diabetes will be the topic of two free events at Scenic Mountain Medical Center (SMMC) this month. "Diabetes Academy" will be presented as the March Healthy Woman event, on Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the Fourth Floor Activity Room at SMMC.

Amy Halfmann, RD, LD, dietitian for SMMC, joined by professional diabetes educators Linda Roberto, RN, BSN, CDE and Shelley Davis, RN, BSN, will discuss this disease; what it is, who it may affect, ways to prevent or delay the onset of diabetes and, once diagnosed, ways to manage the disease in order to lower the risk of complications and to help people lead normal lives.

This program will also be offered on Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. at the Senior Circle "Lunch-n-Learn." Both events are open to men and women of all ages and refreshments will be provided. While there is no charge to attend, seating is limited so reservations are suggested.

For more details call Kim Howell at 268-4842 or Anita Cline at 268-4721.

amount of cardiovascular exercise — 30 minutes a day, five days a week — will reduce your risk.

Take heart. People with pre-diabetes have twice the risk of heart disease and stroke, so cardiovascular health is very important. If you smoke, quit. Lifestyle modifications such as diet and exercise, and medication, if necessary, can help control high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

In celebration of National Diabetes Alert Day Tuesday, find out your risk by taking the Diabetes Risk Test.

Visit [www.SMMC-Cares.com](http://www.SMMC-Cares.com); click on "Health Resources," "Interactive Tools," and "Risk Assessments," to take our Type 2 Diabe-

tes Risk Assessment, or "Interactive Tools," then "Quizzes" to take the Pre-Diabetes Quiz.