

Preventing Diabetes: Why and How

Why is this so important for me?

Regular exercise and good eating are important for everyone's good health. If you have an increased chance of developing diabetes ("prediabetes"), regular exercise and healthy eating can help you delay or even stop diabetes from developing! If you also have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, healthy living can help protect you from heart disease and stroke.

Will I have to make big changes in my life?

Not necessarily. Large studies have shown that you only need to be active for about 20-30 minutes a day and achieve a 5-7% weight loss to delay or prevent the development of diabetes.

What kind of activity should I do?

You don't always need high-intensity exercise to get the health benefits. So you don't need to join a gym. In fact, simply increasing the amount of moderate physical activity (like gardening or walking) can work wonders. You can also make small changes to your daily routine—take the stairs instead of the elevator, get off the bus one stop early and walk the rest of the way, walk to the corner store instead of driving, and use a rake rather than a leaf blower.

Does this mean another diet?

Not really. Take a look at Canada's Food Guide* It provides sensible, balanced guidance for what and how much food to eat every day.

* (available online at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_rainbow_e.html)

Get a clear picture of how you eat now. A food diary is one way to become aware of and improve your eating habits. Another is the Online Nutrition Profile available on the internet at www.dietitians.ca/english/frames.html

How can I stick with my new plan?

Set realistic goals for yourself—for instance:

- "Be able to walk to the corner store without getting winded" or "Over the next week, walk 10 minutes every day."
- "Lose 2-3 pounds (about 1 kg) this month" or "Lose 1 inch (about 2 cm) this month."

Use a chart or journal to keep track of your progress. Then take that journal to your regular visits to the doctor, so you can ask for tips, and discuss any problems you may be having.

Always weigh yourself on the same scale and at the same time of day. But try not to weigh yourself too often—once a week is probably enough. In fact, measuring your waist (with a tape measure) is an even better way to keep track of changes in your body shape.

When you exercise, consider listening to music or watching TV. Being active with a partner or joining a group activity can boost your motivation too.

Variety is important—make regular changes to your activities and to try eat a range of different foods. Don't stop eating all your favourite foods—just eat smaller amounts, eat them less, or try healthier substitutes.

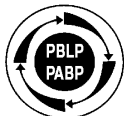
What if I get off track?

Everyone slips up now and then. Don't be hard on yourself. Instead, figure out why it happened and plan to avoid it next time. And, above all, get back to your new lifestyle plan as soon as possible.

Remember—you're in the driver's seat.

How you live your life has a direct effect on when—or even if—you develop diabetes.

Adapted from: Sticking to Lifestyle Changes: Increasing Physical Activity, and Sticking to Lifestyle Changes: Healthy Eating. *American Family Physician* 2004;69:319, 323.



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