

## National Diabetes Month



November is National Diabetes Month, a time when communities across the country team up to bring attention to diabetes.

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. It affects about 37 million Americans, including adults and youth. Diabetes can damage the eyes, kidneys, nerves, and heart, and is linked to some types of cancer. It's estimated that up to 37% of people with untreated prediabetes develop type 2 diabetes within 4 years.

Here are some ways to lower your risk of getting diabetes.

### **1. Reduce your total carb intake**

Eating foods high in refined carbs (e.g., soda, candy, dessert, white bread, pasta, and sweetened breakfast cereal) and sugar increases blood sugar and insulin levels, which may eventually lead to diabetes. Limiting total carbohydrate intake and choosing options that don't cause blood sugar spikes may help reduce your risk.

### **2. Exercise regularly**

Doing physical activity regularly may help prevent diabetes. Exercising regularly may increase insulin sensitivity, which may in turn help prevent diabetes.

### **3. Drink water as your primary beverage.**

Drinking water instead of sugary beverages may help manage blood sugar and insulin levels, thereby reducing your risk of diabetes.

### **4. Try to lose excess weight**

Modest weight loss may significantly reduce your risk of diabetes, particularly if you have excess abdominal weight.

### **5. Quit smoking**

Smoking, especially heavy smoking, is strongly linked to diabetes risk. Quitting has been shown to reduce this risk over time.

### **6. Reduce your portion sizes**

Avoiding large portion sizes may help reduce insulin and blood sugar levels, promote weight loss, and decrease your risk of diabetes.

### **7. Cut back on sedentary behaviors**

Limiting sedentary time, including prolonged sitting, has been shown to reduce your risk of diabetes.

### **8. Follow a high-fiber diet**

Eating a source of fiber at each meal may help prevent spikes in blood sugar and insulin levels, which may reduce your risk of diabetes.

### **9. Minimize your intake of highly processed foods**

Lowering your intake of heavily processed foods benefits several aspects of health. Highly processed foods have undergone significantly more processing and often contain added sugars, unhealthy fats, and chemical preservatives. Examples include hot dogs, chips, frozen desserts, sodas, and candy bars.

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*Written on behalf of the NIH Health and Wellness Council.*