



## Type 2 Review

### Reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes

If you've lived the high-carb life and have become accustomed to the blood sugar roller coaster unleashed by refined sugars and processed foods, you've probably had fleeting thoughts about the possibility of developing type 2 diabetes. Perhaps other factors also put you at risk for diabetes and you're afraid that it's only a matter of time before you receive the dreaded verdict. But, before you resign yourself to that fate, you should know that relatively simple lifestyle modifications can prevent type 2 diabetes.

#### Out of Order

The food we eat is typically converted to glucose, which is then carried by the blood to the cells in our body. Our pancreas produces the hormone insulin to help the cells convert glucose into energy. If the cells do not use insulin properly, glucose builds up in our blood while the cells are starved of energy. The pancreas tries to produce more insulin, but, over time, the supply of insulin is unable to meet the demand. This is type 2 diabetes, which, over the long term, can lead to complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and a host of other health problems.

#### Risk Factors

There are several risk factors for type 2 diabetes, including:

- Being 45 years of age or older
- Being overweight
- Having a parent or sibling with diabetes
- Having an ethnic background that is African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander
- Having had gestational diabetes or giving birth to a baby that weighed more than nine pounds
- Having high blood pressure (140/90 or higher)
- Having high cholesterol (HDL 35 or lower; triglycerides 250 or higher)
- Exercising fewer than three times per week

The National Institutes of Health recommends diabetes testing for those who are 45

#### Doing the Math

**18.2 million**

Number of Americans who have diabetes

**5.2 million**

Number of Americans who are unaware that they have the condition

**1.3 million**

Number of Americans who are diagnosed each year

**\$92 billion**

Direct medical costs to treat diabetes in 2002

**\$40 billion**

Indirect costs of diabetes in 2002, including work loss, disability and premature mortality

Source: National Health Interview Survey 1999-2001 and 1999-2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

years of age or older and who are overweight, or who are under 45, overweight and who have one other risk factor. A fasting blood glucose test or an oral glucose tolerance test will determine whether you have normal blood glucose, pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes.

#### Prevention

If you have normal blood glucose, you're ahead of the game and can take measures to ensure that you won't develop diabetes in the future. Even if you're diagnosed with pre-diabetes, you can still head off full-blown type 2 diabetes.

Maintaining a controlled-carb lifestyle is a crucial component to preventing diabetes. Lowering your carb intake and sticking to whole, natural foods will not only help you lose weight, but will go a long way towards keeping your blood sugar levels stable.

Regular exercise can help ameliorate several risk factors. Exercise can lower blood pressure and cholesterol, and helps your body use insulin. In a federally funded study, subjects that exercised 30 minutes per day most days of the week significantly reduced their risk for diabetes.

If you have high blood pressure, you should reduce your consumption of salt and alcohol. You should consult with your doctor about whether you need medications to help control your blood pressure or cholesterol.

#### Doing It

Lifestyle changes don't happen overnight, so be patient with yourself. Increase your chance of success by making a plan and deciding which changes you're going to make and how you're going to make them. Ask family and friends for their support. Remind yourself that you're worth it, and reward yourself as you make progress.

The thought of developing diabetes can be frightening, but you can combat the fear with knowledge about how to lower your risk of getting the disease and making the commitment to change your lifestyle. ♦

### Symptoms

Although there are several symptoms of diabetes, many of them mimic other conditions. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you should consult your health professional.

- Increased urination, especially at night
- Increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Unusual weight loss
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Blurry vision
- Sores that do not heal