

Being Active When You Have Prediabetes



Being active will help you feel better, move better and sleep better. Experts now say that any physical activity counts towards better health – even just a few minutes! Having prediabetes means your blood glucose level (blood sugar level) is higher than normal but isn't high enough to be called type 2 diabetes. Prediabetes is the step before developing type 2 diabetes. Being active and shedding a few pounds are proven strategies that can actually prevent or delay it.



Getting Started

Keep it Simple

Just sit less and move around more! Walk to the mailbox. Walk the dog. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs. Find opportunities to move throughout your day. It all adds up.

Talk with Your Doctor

Ask your health care provider if there are any safety considerations before starting or increasing physical activity. Discuss options or programs to help you lose weight.

Get Expert Support

Ask for a referral to a registered dietitian, personal trainer or Diabetes Prevention Program. This program can help you form healthy habits and may be reimbursed by Medicare, your insurance or employer.

Motivation

What will help you stick with it? Would being active with a friend help? Is there a better time of day? Would you do better in a supervised program or fitness center? What's fun for you?

Prediabetes Tips and Facts

Prediabetes is defined as fasting blood glucose between 100-125 mg/dl or A1C between 5.7 and 6.4 percent. Get your levels checked at least once a year.

If you do nothing, your fasting blood glucose and A1c may go higher and you could develop type 2 diabetes. If you're active enough and lose 5-7 percent of your body weight, you can stop or delay type 2 diabetes from happening.

Regular moderate-intensity physical activity (like brisk walking) can improve your body's natural sensitivity to insulin and reduce stomach fat.

If you are carrying extra weight, have arthritis or are limited by other injuries, start with low-impact activities such as walking, exercising in a pool, cycling or yoga.

Your health care provider may decide to prescribe a medication to help you decrease your odds of developing type 2 diabetes or to assist in weight loss. Follow their instructions.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity (like a brisk walk, light cycling, dancing or water exercise) to vigorous activity (like jogging, singles tennis or hiking hills). You'll improve the way your body stores and uses glucose, as well as your stamina and heart health.

What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity

How often?

3-7 days/week

How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard

How much?

Start w/a few minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 total minutes over the day.

Remember: Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20-30 minutes. Be active however and wherever you can. To lose weight, do twice as much activity.

To stay safe and injury free:

- Start with light to medium effort.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow!
- Warm up and cool down at any easy pace before and after exercise.

Strength Training

Strength training makes you stronger and plays a role in preventing type 2 diabetes. More muscle tissue makes your body more sensitive to insulin – a good thing! Plus, strength training can make fun activities or chores like lifting laundry baskets or yardwork easier and safer.

What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body (for example, kitchen counter push-ups or chair squats).

How often?

2-3 Days/week
*Rest day in between

How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium or hard effort.

How much?

10-15 repetitions to start (for each major muscle group). Build up to 8-10 reps of challenging effort.

Remember: If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

Strength Training Cautions

- Slowly increase how much you lift and how often.
- Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. This causes your blood pressure to go up.

Did You Know?

Interval training can be effective for those with prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. For example, after warming up, walk 1 block really fast and then 2 blocks at your normal speed. Or ride the exercise bike hard for 1 minute followed by 1 minute at a recovery pace. Repeat 4 times. Build up to 10 repeats.

Other Ideas for Physical Activity and Health

Aerobic activity and strength training are at the heart of a program for those looking to prevent type 2 diabetes. You will also benefit from these other options.

Take More Steps

Use a smart phone or activity tracker to measure your progress and stay motivated. Count your steps daily for the first week. Slowly build up to 7,000 or 9,000 steps/day.

Be Food Smart

Choose foods lower in calories, fat and added sugar to help you lose weight (about 1-2 lbs/week). Eat fresh fruits, veggies, whole grain foods, low-fat dairy and lean protein. The Mediterranean diet uses these types of foods and has proven to prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes.

Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Try pickleball. Dance. Tend your garden. Play outdoors with your kids or grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it often.

Flexibility

Stretch your muscles 2-3 days/week to the point of feeling tightness. Hold for 10-30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults). For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs.

More Help

To learn more about changing your health habits when you have prediabetes, check out these websites:

National Diabetes Prevention Program: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/index.html>

Physical Activity Guidelines: <https://health.gov/paguidelines/>

American Diabetes Association: <http://www.diabetes.org>

Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/index.html>

Go to www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro to find an ACSM certified exercise professional near you.