

Diabetes: Are you at risk?

Having diabetes means there's too much glucose, or sugar, in your blood. Many of the risk factors for diabetes may be controlled by a healthy lifestyle—things like changing to healthy eating, losing weight and exercising. If you know your risks, you can make changes that help prevent diabetes.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are too high because of the body's inability to make enough insulin or use insulin properly.

There are two key players:

- Glucose (sugar) is fuel for the body's cells
- Insulin takes glucose from the blood to the cells

In people with diabetes, the body makes little to no insulin, and/or the body prevents the cells from using the insulin it makes (insulin resistance). As a result, glucose cannot get into the cells, so it stays in the blood, causing high blood glucose (hyperglycemia).¹

Types of diabetes

Type 1 diabetes

The pancreas does not produce insulin, which causes a buildup of glucose in your bloodstream.

Type 2 diabetes

The pancreas still makes insulin, but the insulin doesn't do its job as it should. Glucose just hangs around and builds up in the blood. Initially, the pancreas makes even more insulin to get glucose to go into the cells, but eventually the pancreas gets worn out from working so hard and doesn't produce as much insulin.

Prediabetes

Prediabetes is when a person's blood sugar level is higher than normal, but not high enough to constitute a diabetes diagnosis. This puts a person at a greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the future.

Warning signs of diabetes²

Talk to your healthcare provider if you experience any of the following:

- Frequent urination
- Being unusually thirsty or hungry
- Being unusually tired or fatigued
- Feeling grumpy regularly
- Blurry vision
- Cuts and bruises that are slow to heal
- Tingling, pain or numbness in the hands/feet
- Unexplained weight changes



How is diabetes diagnosed?

There are several types of tests used to screen for diabetes:

Fasting plasma glucose (FPG) test

This measures your blood glucose level at a single point in time. It’s usually done in the morning, after fasting for at least eight hours.

A1c test

This test provides your average levels of blood glucose over the past three months. The results are reported as a percentage; the higher the percentage, the higher your average blood glucose levels.

Oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT)

This two-hour test measures your blood glucose levels before and two hours after drinking a special drink. It tells your healthcare provider how well your body processes glucose.

Random plasma glucose test

This test checks your blood glucose level at any time of day. It is most often used when a person has severe diabetes symptoms.³

Have you ever been told you blood sugar / glucose level was elevated?

When was the last time you saw your doctor and had blood work done?

Questions for my doctor

Are you at risk?

Take the diabetes risk assessment to determine your risk. Use the results of this assessment to discuss your risk of diabetes with your healthcare provider. Use the boxes on the right to write your score for each question, and then add up your total score at the end.⁴

Your diabetes risk assessment		Points
1. What is your age?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 40 years (0 points) 40–49 years (1 point) 50–59 years (2 points) 60 years or older (3 points) 	
2. Are you a man or a woman?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Man (1 point) Woman (0 Points) 	
3. If you're a woman, do you have a history of gestational diabetes or polycystic ovary syndrome?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (1 point) No (0 points) N/A (0 points) 	
4. Do you have a family history of diabetes (for example, your mother, father, sister or brother)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (1 point) No (0 points) 	
5. Have you ever been diagnosed with high blood pressure?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (1 point) No (0 points) 	
6. Are you physically active (for example, do you get 150 minutes of exercise each week)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes (0 points) No (1 point) 	
7. Are you overweight, obese or extremely obese (use the chart on the next page to help determine which category you fit into)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal weight (0 points) Overweight (1 point) Obese (2 points) Extremely obese (3 points) 	
8. What race or ethnicity best describes you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White/Caucasian (0 points) American Indian or Alaska native (1 point) Asian American (1 point) Black or African American (1 point) Hispanic or Latino (1 point) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1 point) Other (0 points) 	
Your total score		_____

Diabetes risk assessment results

According to the American Diabetes Association, if your total score was greater than or equal to 5, you are at an increased risk for type 2 diabetes.⁴ If you are at high risk, see your healthcare provider for a simple blood test to check for diabetes.

Some questions you may want to ask include:

- Should I get a diabetes screening test?
- What different tests are available?
- What are the pros and cons of each test?
- What can I do to lower my risk for diabetes?
- What are the symptoms of diabetes?
- If I am diagnosed with diabetes, what are my treatment options?

Schedule your screening today

If you think you're at risk for diabetes, talk to your healthcare provider about being screened as soon as possible. It's important to get the treatment you need to prevent or delay complications.

Reference chart for your diabetes risk assessment ⁵			
Height	Weight		
4' 10"	119–142	143–190	191+
4' 11"	124–147	148–197	198+
5' 0"	128–152	153–203	204+
5' 1"	132–157	158–210	211+
5' 2"	136–163	164–217	218+
5' 3"	141–168	169–224	225+
5' 4"	145–173	174–231	232+
5' 5"	150–179	180–239	240+
5' 6"	155–185	186–246	247+
5' 7"	159–190	191–254	255+
5' 8"	164–196	197–261	262+
5' 9"	169–202	203–269	270+
5' 10"	174–208	209–277	278+
5' 11"	179–214	215–285	286+
6' 0"	184–220	221–293	294+
6' 1"	189–226	227–301	302+
6' 2"	194–232	233–310	311+
6' 3"	200–239	240–318	319+
6' 4"	205–245	246–327	328+
	1 point	2 points	3 points

If you weigh less than the weight in the left column: 0 points

Sources

1. "What is Diabetes?", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last accessed Oct. 30, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/diabetes.html>.
2. "Diabetes Symptoms", American Diabetes Association, last accessed Oct. 30, 2023, <https://diabetes.org/diabetes/type-1/symptoms>.
3. "Diabetes Tests & Diagnosis", National Institute for Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, last accessed Oct. 30, 2023, <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/tests-diagnosis>.
4. "Are you at risk for type 2 diabetes?", American Diabetes Association, last accessed Oct. 30, 2023, <http://main.diabetes.org/dorg/PDFs/risk-test-paper-version.pdf>.
5. Adapted from "Prediabetes Risk Test", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last accessed Oct. 30, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/pdf/Prediabetes-Risk-Test-Final.pdf>.

This is for informational purposes only and does not replace treatment or advice from a healthcare professional. If you have questions, please talk with your doctor. Talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program or making any changes to your diet.