

Health Awareness

Take Charge of Tomorrow: Preventing Diabetes Health Problems

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Preventing Diabetes Health Problems

(NAPS)—November is National Diabetes Month, when communities across the country spread awareness about diabetes.

Did you know that at least 1 in 10 Americans has diabetes? That's 38.4 million adults and children.

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. Diabetes can raise your risk of having health problems such as heart attack, stroke, cancer and diseases that affect your kidneys, eyes, teeth or feet. The good news is that preventing diabetes or managing diabetes as early as possible after diagnosis may help you prevent these health problems.

"Managing diabetes is a daily responsibility that can make a huge impact on staying healthy and preventing complications down the road," said Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers, director of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). "I encourage everyone with diabetes to work with their health care team to learn how they can best manage their condition to maintain an active life and delay or avoid diabetes-related problems."

Prevent or Delay Type 2 Diabetes

You are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes if you have overweight or obesity, are age 35 or older or have a family history of type 2 diabetes. Other risk factors include having prediabetes or a history of gestational diabetes.

If you have overweight or obesity, losing 5% to 7% of your weight can lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. For instance, if you weigh 200 pounds, your goal would be to lose 10 to 14 pounds.

Visit the NIDDK website and use the Diabetes Risk Management Calculator to find out how much weight you might want to lose to lower your diabetes risk.

Manage Your Diabetes ABCs

If you have diabetes, managing your diabetes ABCs is an essential first step in preventing diabetes health problems. The diabetes ABCs are:

- A1C blood glucose level.
- Blood pressure.

- Cholesterol.
- Stopping smoking.

Health care professionals give the A1C test to measure your average blood glucose level over the last three months. Some people with diabetes also use devices to track their blood glucose throughout the day and night.

Research shows that keeping your diabetes ABCs in a healthy range can help prevent blood vessel damage and health problems from diabetes. Ask your health care team what blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure levels are healthy for you.

Make Lifestyle Changes To Build Healthy Habits

You can help prevent type 2 diabetes or manage your diabetes ABCs by building healthy habits and taking steps to:

- Plan healthy meals and snacks that are lower in calories, sugar, saturated fat and salt.
- Be physically active most days of the week.
- Reach or maintain a healthy weight.
- Stop smoking, vaping or using other tobacco products.
- Get enough sleep and take care of your mental health.

When planning meals, try to choose more fruits, nonstarchy vegetables, whole grains, lean protein foods, and low-fat or nonfat dairy products or dairy alternatives. Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

Walking is a simple way to be active. Invite a loved one or a friend to make walking a social activity. If you're not active now or a health condition prevents you from being active, ask your health care professional about physical activities that are best for you.

Making lifestyle changes can be hard. Start slow and build healthier habits from there. Ask for help from your family, friends and health care team.

To learn more about preventing or delaying diabetes and diabetes health problems this National Diabetes Month, visit the NIDDK website at www.niddk.nih.gov and follow us on social media @NIDDKgov.