What to Do If You Are Prediabetic

by AFRA WILLMORE

Preventing Prediabetes Turning Into Type 2 Diabetes

I wish I had known about prediabetes and had the chance to change my lifestyle before I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. I now know that many of the niggling symptoms I was experiencing in the years leading up to my diagnosis were warning signs.

I think in my heart of hearts I knew I was likely to develop the condition – I used to avoid reading about diabetes even though my paternal grandmother went blind with type 2 diabetes.

In addition, I had been slightly overweight for years and I was (and still am) the typical diabetic apple shape with skinny arms and legs and a waist measurement well over 31cms.

People used to ask me if I was pregnant because I looked relatively thin with a very rounded, swollen stomach. I used to tell myself it was bloating caused by bread, veg or soda, and tried to ignore the adverts everywhere shouting that my body shape put me at high risk.

If you are tempted to turn away too – don't!

If you are prediabetic (also known as borderline diabetic) the good news is that if you tackle your fears and make even small changes to your lifestyle there is a chance you can slow down or even completely avoid developing full-blown type 2 diabetes.

Risk Factors

So what are the risk factors and symptoms of pre-diabetes?

The main give-away is that your healthcare provider might have advised you your blood glucose (sugar) levels are higher than is considered normal, but not yet at a level classed as diabetic.

Other risk factors include:

- Being overweight or obese.
- Having a close relative, like a parent or brother or sister, who has diabetes.
- Being over 40

- Having given birth to a baby that weighed over 9lbs.
- Having high blood pressure and/or low "good" cholesterol or high triglyceride (blood fat) levels.
- Some groups are genetically more prone to prediabetes and diabetes, including Native Americans, Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians, but prediabetes can affect anyone of any age, gender or race.

Tick a few of those boxes? Don’t panic – making a few changes to your life will benefit your health generally and could even prevent you developing Type 2 diabetes at all.

Next page: how to decrease your risk of type 2 diabetes.

Decreasing Your Type 2 Diabetes Risk

Wondering what to do if you are prediabetic? Making some lifestyle changes can make all the difference.

Lose Weight

Yes, it's true that a thin person could develop type 2 diabetes, but often it's those who are overweight who are at risk.

Firstly, face up to your weight issues. I know, it’s not as simple as just deciding to lose weight. But when you consider what health issues can accompany type 2 diabetes, including a significant increase in the risk of stroke, heart disease, sight-threatening eye conditions, circulation issues and more, it’s worth sorting it out sooner rather than later.

A nutritionist, dietician or a diabetic nurse or doctor will be able to advise you on diet changes, or you could invest in a special prediabetes recipe book with low carb, high GI meal suggestions.

This kind of diet, balanced with plenty of fresh ingredients and low in processed and sugary foods, will help keep blood sugars low and stable rather than roller-coastering throughout the day.

Research type 2 diabetes and complications on websites like this one and use the facts to motivate you – and remember that as a bonus you will be improving your heart health. You might even be able to treat yourself to some new clothes to suit your slimmed down figure.

Don’t think of your efforts as a diet – these changes need to be permanent to keep your risk of developing diabetes to a minimum.

Keep your goals realistic and don’t try to lose too much weight at once. A slow steady loss is statistically much more likely to stay off in the long term.

If you have trouble with your will power, share your goals and the reason for your new lifestyle with friends and family who will – hopefully – then be more likely to support, rather than sabotage, your efforts.

Consider joining a weight-loss group, or encouraging someone close to you to join you on your new path. It’s much easier to succeed with someone in the same boat who will sympathize and encourage you on your difficult days – and you can return the favour when they are struggling.

Start Exercising

You knew this was coming, because diet and exercise pretty much always go together! But don’t worry, I am the last person who will tell you to clad yourself in lycra and join a gym or start running marathons – although if you fancy it, I take my hat off to you!

First things first – if you have any health issues or are significantly overweight please check in with your doctor to make sure they are happy for you to start exercising. They might suggest starting slowly with a regular gentle swim, or to increase the amount of walking you do day to day.

Even tiny changes can make a difference – take the stairs instead of the elevator, even if it’s just for one floor. Get off the bus one stop before your usual one. You could park your car further from your destination than you

normally would, or even better, leave it at home. Good for your wallet, waistline and the environment.

I enjoy walking with friends who have a dog, and my children love our walks too. I feel good, fitter and glad that they have had fun away from the TV or computer screen.

You might surprise yourself and actually enjoy the way the changes make you feel. You may never know if those changes prevented the onset of type 2 diabetes, but whatever – you will enjoy a healthier, longer life regardless.