

How to Stop Prediabetes in Its Tracks?



1. Lose Extra Weight. 2. Make Exercise a Habit. 3. If You Smoke, Stop.

When You Need Medication

When your doctor tells you that you have prediabetes, you might think there's no reason to take action just yet. Or you might assume that you're definitely going to get diabetes. Not so! You do need to take prediabetes seriously, but there's still time to turn things around -- if you start now.

The goal is to get your blood sugar level out of the prediabetes range, and keep it that way. What you do every day makes a big difference. Making lifestyle changes may be even more powerful than just taking medication.

Start by making these three changes.

1. Lose Extra Weight.

If you're overweight, slimming down is the key to turning the odds in your favour. Research shows that shedding just 5% to 10% of your body weight is often enough to get blood sugar levels back into the normal range and avoid diabetes or at least delay its onset.

To reach your goal, limit portion sizes; cut calories; and eat fewer foods that are high in fat (especially saturated fat), sugar, and carbohydrates. You should also eat a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains.

2. Make Exercise a Habit.

Leading an active life is a must. Aim for 30 minutes of aerobic activity (something that raises your heart rate, like walking, biking, or swimming) 5 days a week (150 minutes per week). Plus, do some strength-training exercise, like lifting weights or using resistance bands, at least twice a week.

Strength work builds muscle, which helps lower your blood sugar level, helps your body respond better to insulin (which controls blood sugar), and burns calories even when you're not moving.

3. If You Smoke, Stop.

Smoking is strongly linked to diabetes: People who smoke are 30% to 40% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those who don't. And people with diabetes who continue smoking are more likely to develop complications such as heart disease and blindness. So the sooner you ditch the cigarettes, the better.

When You Need Medication

While lifestyle changes can work wonders, some people with prediabetes also need medication.

Your doctor may prescribe metformin if you have certain risk factors, such as low levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol, high triglycerides (a type of blood fat), a parent or sibling with diabetes, or are overweight. If you take metformin, you'll need to follow up with your doctor. You'll also need to keep up a healthy lifestyle.

Take action now, and ask for extra help from your doctor, a nutritionist, or personal trainer if you need it.