

Preventing Type 2 Diabetes



Type 2 diabetes is one of the biggest healthcare challenges of our time, costing the NHS over £10 billion every year - according to Public Health England, someone is diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes every 2 minutes. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body either doesn't produce enough insulin or the insulin it does produce doesn't work properly (called insulin resistance). Or it can be a combination of both.

Many people have type 2 diabetes without realising. This is because symptoms do not necessarily make you feel unwell.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of type 2 diabetes include (but are not limited to):

- ❖ Peeing more than usual, particularly at night
- ❖ Feeling thirsty all the time
- ❖ Feeling very tired
- ❖ Losing weight without trying to
- ❖ Cuts or wounds taking longer to heal



So who is at risk?

The risk factors associated with Type 2 diabetes are varied.

- ❖ Age - the older you are, the greater your risk is likely to be
- ❖ Your family history if you have a parent, brother, sister or child with Type 2 diabetes
- ❖ Your ethnicity - you're more likely to get Type 2 diabetes if you're over 25 and from a Chinese, South Asian, Black Caribbean or Black African ethnic background
- ❖ Weight - you are more at risk if you carry excess weight or have obesity

The good news is that there is strong evidence that the onset of Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed in those at risk. This is achieved through a nutritious diet and increased physical activity, both of which will help obtain a healthy weight.

The NHS recommend we all get 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise every week.



Examples include:

- ◆ Brisk walking
- ◆ Cycling
- ◆ Aerobics or other fitness class
- ◆ Dancing
- ◆ Doubles tennis
- ◆ Active gardening i.e. pushing a lawn mower
- ◆ Hiking
- ◆ Active housework

Ideally, also aim for strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles. Examples include yoga, weights or resistance work.



If you are new to regular activity or simply find it difficult to fit it into your busy lifestyle, aim to start with 10 minutes a day to begin with. Small, manageable chunks of time are often easier to find and once you've got into the habit of setting that time aside, gradually increasing it will be easier. Aim for an activity you will genuinely enjoy to give yourself the best chance of keeping up with the habit.

A healthy, balanced diet will reduce your overall risk and if you need to lose weight, for ongoing sustainable weight loss, it is recommended to do it gradually. Aim for around 0.5 to 1kg a week.

For those at risk of Type 2 diabetes, the NHS have a free programme called Healthier You NHS

Diabetes Prevention Programme, or Healthier You programme for short, which can help to support you. It offers a range of personalised support options and you'll have access to trained health coaches. You may be eligible for the programme if you are aged over 18, not pregnant and score 'moderate' or 'high' on the Diabetes UK Know Your Risk tool.

Visit <https://riskscore.diabetes.org.uk/start> for more information.

Further reading:

Diabetes UK
<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

NHS
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/type-2-diabetes/>

NHS Eat Well
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

British Heart Foundation has good advice on how to be more active
<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/healthy-living/staying-active>