

Prediabetes: Should You Be Tested?

Borderline diabetes is called prediabetes. It's present when blood sugar levels are moderately high, indicating a risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

Untreated, type 2 diabetes and persistent high blood sugar can cause crippling health problems, including kidney damage, nerve damage and arterial blockages, resulting in strokes, heart attacks, blindness and amputations.

Risk factors for prediabetes include:

- A family history of diabetes.
- Overweight or obese.
- Not exercising.
- Latino, Asian-, Native- or African-American ethnicity.
- Having diabetes during pregnancy.
- Smoking (smokers are 30% to 40% more likely to develop diabetes than nonsmokers).

Ask your health care provider about testing if you're age 45 or older or have any of the risk factors noted above. Prediabetes can be targeted and prevented by addressing those reversible lifestyle factors affecting your health, and sometimes with medication.

Two steps to dropping your prediabetes risk by half:

1. Lose 5% of your body weight (e.g., 10 pounds if you weigh 200).
2. Exercise moderately (such as brisk walking) 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

Even if you can't get to your ideal weight, losing just 10 to 15 pounds can improve your body's use of insulin – the key to healthy blood sugar.



November is American Diabetes Month.



Breathe Easy

Take time to focus on your lungs. Just like your heart, joints and other parts of your body, your lungs age. They can become less flexible and lose strength, making breathing more difficult — especially if you develop lung disease.

5 ways to keep your lungs working well:

1. **Prevent infection.** Avoid exposure to cold and flu germs, which can cause serious respiratory infection. Get vaccinated annually against the flu; ask your health care provider if you also need a pneumonia vaccination.
2. **Exercise aerobically.** Nonstop workouts that moderately raise your heart rate (e.g., brisk walking, swimming, biking) can significantly aid your lung capacity.
3. **Breathe deep.** Most of the time we take shallow breaths. Deep breathing clears the lungs and provides a fuller oxygen exchange. As often as possible: Slowly breathe in (count 1 to 4) through your nose; then breathe out very slowly.
4. **Get regular health care.** During checkups, your provider can listen to your breathing and identify potential problems.
5. **Quit smoking.** Cigarette smoking destroys lung tissue, putting you at serious risk for lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

COPD symptoms include: increasing breathlessness due to emphysema, chronic bronchitis or persistent asthma attacks. Early screening can identify COPD before major loss of lung function occurs.

Lung cancer symptoms to watch for: chronic coughing and shortness of breath; repeated pneumonia or bronchitis; coughing up blood; pain in the chest, neck, shoulder and upper back. Learn more at lung.org/stop-smoking/.



November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month and COPD Awareness Month.



November 15 is the Great American Smokeout, a good time to set a quit date if you use tobacco.

Your health care provider and resources at the American Cancer Society can help: cancer.org.

November is Healthy Skin Month, a good time to remember some self-care tips. Lock in moisture by applying lotion or cream to damp skin after washing your face and taking a bath or shower. Need an easy, inexpensive way to care for very dry, rough, cracked skin? The American Academy of Dermatology recommends petroleum jelly for problem areas on feet, elbows and hands. Most important: Use sunscreen year round. Tell your health care provider about suspicious skin changes. Learn more at aad.org/public.



Holiday Dinner Tips

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Sharing meals with friends and family is a special part of the festive holiday season. Here are 5 ways to minimize kitchen time, as you maximize people time.



- 1. Don't do all of the work yourself.** Invite guests to bring a dish and share the work. Even if they don't cook, guests can help by creating a fruit platter, bringing beverages or buying dessert.
- 2. Forget about fancy.** Trying chicken cordon bleu for the first time when you have 20 guests coming is not a good idea. Make your tried-and-true, well-loved recipes that you can pull off with ease. And make as much as you can in advance.
- 3. Prepare salad before and refrigerate it.** For a lettuce-based salad, add dressing just before serving. For a grain-based salad (e.g., pasta or quinoa), dress it in advance so the flavors have a chance to blend.
- 4. If you have a dish that must be cooked and served immediately,** measure and prep all of your ingredients in advance.
- 5. Know about likes and dislikes before you plan your menu.** Vegetarian guests? Any food allergies or intolerances? Avoid last-minute cooking: When you invite guests, ask about preferences.

Gather the special people in your life and enjoy more socializing and less cooking.



Thanksgiving Day is also Family Health History Day, November 22.

Why not spend a few minutes with your family exchanging medical histories? Common diseases that often run in families include diabetes, heart attacks and cancer. Get started with **My Family Health Portrait** at familyhistory.hhs.gov.

“Your positive action combined with positive thinking results in success.” — Shiv Khera



Do You Need That EKG?

An EKG (electrocardiogram) is a painless test that uses sensors placed on the skin over your chest. It can detect how long an electrical wave moves from one part of your heart to another, and whether the speed is normal, slow, too fast or irregular. EKGs can be performed at rest, while you exercise, or with a wearable device that records your heart's activity over days or weeks.

An EKG can help diagnose heart attacks, abnormal heart rhythms, heart failure and other cardiac problems. The test isn't always diagnostic by itself and can't be used to reliably predict your future heart health. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) doesn't recommend screening for heart disease with an EKG if you are at low risk for cardiovascular disorders.

Do you need an EKG if you have an intermediate or high risk for heart disease but have no symptoms and haven't been diagnosed with cardiovascular disease? The USPSTF states we can't know if the benefits of a screening EKG outweigh potential harms. Keep in mind that abnormal EKG findings sometimes lead to unnecessary invasive procedures and treatments.

Bottom line: Discuss whether you need EKG with your health care provider. Base your decision on your individual risk factors for heart disease: older age, male gender, smoking, high blood pressure, being overweight or obese, diabetes, high cholesterol and a personal or family history of heart disease.

Other reasons for having an EKG:

- You are preparing for surgery.
- You have possible heart-related symptoms such as chest pain, palpitations, breathing problems or unexplained fatigue.
- You have unusual heart sounds heard through a stethoscope.
- You take medications or have a device, such as a pacemaker, affecting your heart.



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