You may already know that diabetes can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. But have you heard about a condition called pre-diabetes that can also damage your body — often with few or no symptoms? Pre-diabetes is diagnosed when blood glucose levels are above normal but not high enough to be labeled diabetes. Your health care provider can easily test your blood sugar levels using the fasting plasma glucose test (FPG) or the oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT).

It’s important to identify pre-diabetes, because lifestyle changes can delay or prevent the progression to a full-blown disease.

Reducing body weight by five to 10 percent and exercising for 30 minutes on most days can reduce your risk by up to 58 percent. For some, these healthy choices can actually return blood glucose levels to normal and avoid the condition’s damaging effects.

For more information, go to www.diabetes.org.

**Here are some testing guidelines:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Testing Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overweight and 45 or older</td>
<td>Get tested at your next medical office visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight and under 45</td>
<td>Check with your health care provider to determine if you have other risk factors — testing may be recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal weight and over 45</td>
<td>Ask your health care provider if you need to be tested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Balance Your Life:** It often seems that there’s not enough time for fun, taking care of yourself or doing what needs to be done. Too many “must-dos” lead to fatigue, stress and illness. To put things back into balance, begin with adding more time to your day and adding more life to your time. Help is in this month’s Well Connections Online Supplement — check it out at www.personalbest.com/extras/stressnov10.

**THE UPSIDE OF STRESS**

Stress is something we should all avoid — or is it? Some researchers believe that minor short-term stress may actually help in some ways, such as improving your immunity and making you more productive.

Your brain needs a challenge and stimulation to stay healthy, and muscles get stronger when they’re stressed. The key is keeping stress at a reasonable level and reacting in a healthy way.

**STRATEGIES for STAYING on the UPSIDE of STRESS**

**Six steps for stress success:**

1. Determine your optimal stress level, and aim to stay within that range. If possible, postpone some challenges (such as making a major purchase) when you’re feeling overwhelmed, and seek out new challenges (such as taking a class) when you’re feeling bored.

2. Schedule daily activities that relax or reenergize you — such as walking, meditating, gardening or socializing.

3. Seek help and support when needed. Many people like to help, so you may be doing them a favor — especially if you’ve helped them in the past.

4. Consider the positives. Most situations have both pros and cons.

5. If a situation bothers you, look for solutions (versus complaining).

6. Educate yourself. Look for stress management classes and counselors that can help you cope.
Quick Course in SEIZURES

In a seizure disorder, abnormal electrical activity in the brain triggers physical or behavioral changes. Seizures can have many causes, ranging from low blood sugar to brain tumors. In some cases, the cause can’t be identified. Depending on which part of the brain is affected, symptoms may include:
- Changes in consciousness (“blackouts”) or emotion (such as unexplained fear or laughter).
- Unusual skin sensations spreading over an arm, leg or the trunk.
- Flashing lights or visions.
- Loss of muscle control or muscle twitching.
- A bitter or metallic taste.

When the cause is temporary — such as high fever or drug withdrawal — seizures typically stop once the underlying condition is resolved. Recurrent seizures are known as epilepsy.

SEIZURES: WHAT TO DO

Call 9-1-1 for a seizure in someone with no prior history. Seizures generally end within 15 minutes; however, a person who is seizing can be hurt during that time by inhaling food, vomit or fluid into the lungs, or by not getting enough oxygen.

DO NOT
- restrain the person, force anything into the mouth or perform CPR or mouth-to-mouth breathing.
- turn the person to the side if vomiting occurs, position the person’s head to keep the airway clear and seek help immediately if the person has repeated or prolonged seizures without returning to normal.

DO
- protect the head. Cradling can be useful.

Play it safe: If you have epilepsy, wear a medical alert tag and tell others what to do if an episode occurs.

Aid for Eczema

What is it? An itchy, red rash could mean eczema, a skin condition affecting both children and adults. The rash commonly occurs on the face, knees, hands or feet and can also appear crusty, cracked or oozing.

What causes it? Though the exact cause of eczema is unknown, it’s believed to be a skin defect combined with abnormal immune reactions. Some types of eczema are caused by contact between skin and clothing, detergents, nickel in jewelry, toiletries or even sweat. Other cases may result from environmental conditions: pollutants, microbes, allergens (such as animal dander or pollen) and changes in temperature or humidity. Stress may also be a factor.

How do I prevent it? Identify eczema triggers by tracking the circumstances when symptoms occur.

Prevention tips: Try wearing loose-fitting, cotton-blend clothing; use dye- and fragrance-free detergents; and wash all new clothes before you wear them. Relieve stress.

How do I treat it? Take short showers with warm (not hot) water and mild soap. Next, apply hydrocortisone, prescription cream or anti-itch lotion. Then apply a hypoallergenic lotion all over to prevent dryness. To relieve itching, take an antihistamine at night (to avoid daytime drowsiness) or apply cool compresses. If you can’t resist scratching the area, cover it with a dressing.

Due diligence: Your health care provider can confirm if you have eczema, rule out other conditions and prescribe medication if needed.

“Happiness lies, first of all, in health.” ~ George William Curtis

NEXT MONTH: NO HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN