

Conversation Guide for Providers

Supporting Families With Children at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes



It can be a challenge to talk to parents about their kids and the risk for type 2 diabetes, especially when overweight is a factor. Use this guide to start conversations about eating, activity, and stress to help families lower that risk.

Sharing BMI results

- Explain that BMI is a screening tool used to look at growth patterns based on height and weight, not a diagnosis. Trends over time are more important than one number.
- Emphasize that a higher BMI is just one factor that may increase a child's risk for developing prediabetes and type 2 diabetes.
- Use supportive, person-first language that focuses on health, not appearance. Avoid stigmatizing words like “obese,” “fat,” and “chubby.” “Overweight” is often preferred.

Conversation starters

- *“Your child’s BMI is higher than expected for their age and sex. This doesn’t mean your child is unhealthy right now—it tells us we should take a closer look at their overall health.”*
- *“A family history of prediabetes or type 2 diabetes, eating habits, and physical activity also play a role.”*
- *“Let’s talk about lowering risk over time. There are small steps you can take right away that can help make a difference.”*

Focus on the family

- Let them know you understand that time, energy, and resources are limited, and adding more to-do’s can seem overwhelming.
- Emphasize that health is about building lifelong habits, not just managing weight.
- Frame lifestyle changes as a shared family effort.

Conversation starters

- *“I ask these questions of all families because routines at home affect health in a lot of ways.”*
- *“What does a typical week look like for your family?”*
- *“What’s one healthy routine you really like and would like to keep doing?”*



Preventing type 2 diabetes in kids.

For more resources, visit

cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention-type-2/type-2-diabetes-in-kids.html



Healthy eating

- Encourage families to focus on how food makes them feel—energized, strong, or satisfied—not on weight or appearance.
- Emphasize that while some foods are more nutritious than others, there aren't any "good" or "bad" foods.

Physical activity

- Explain that physical activity helps prevent prediabetes and type 2 diabetes and supports both physical and mental health.
- Encourage parents to get more active as a family, rather than focusing just on the child.

Reducing stress

- Explain that stress affects sleep, energy, eating habits, moods, and overall health—both theirs and their child's.
- Emphasize routines, schedules, school demands, sleep, and family stressors rather than individual self-control—especially important for kids.

Next steps

- Let parents know that bodies—especially kids' bodies—are responsive and resilient, and that supportive changes can make a real difference over time.
- Share **Healthy Habits for Families** for tips they can try right away.
- Encourage the family to choose a small goal together.
- Let them know you'll check in at their next visit to provide support and celebrate progress.

Conversation starters

- *"Walk me through what meals look like on a school day."*
- *"Where do meals usually happen—at the table, on the couch, in the car?"*
- *"I'd like to set aside dedicated time to talk about food and family. Let's find a time that works."*

Conversation starters

- *"What kinds of physical activity does your child enjoy?"*
- *"When does your child naturally move more—weekends, school, playing with friends?"*
- *"Are there activities you do together as a family?"*
- *"A lot of families struggle with time, weather, or safety—does any of that apply to you?"*

Conversation starters

- *"We often talk about food and activity, but stress matters for kids' health too. Let's talk a bit about stress in your child's day."*
- *"What kinds of things feel stressful for your child right now—at school or at home?"*
- *"Stress is one area where small changes can really help. Have you noticed what helps your child relax or feel calm at the end of the day?"*

Conversation starters

- *"We're aiming for progress, not perfection—one or two changes is enough to start."*
- *"Of everything we've talked about, what feels like the easiest place to start?"*
- *"Let's pick one small goal to try until the next visit. What healthy change feels realistic for your family right now?"*