

## Connecting Thread

# Preventing Type 2 Diabetes

### BACKGROUND

*New Beginnings* participants might be worried about their loved ones developing type 2 diabetes. This Connecting Thread provides information about the ways that type 2 diabetes can be prevented, common risk factors, and how participants can help their loved ones.

Family history of diabetes is an important risk factor for developing type 2 diabetes. Most people with type 2 diabetes have a family member who also has the disease. But diabetes does not have to be a family affair. Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed by making healthy food choices, being more physically active, and losing weight if overweight.

People at risk of type 2 diabetes may be diagnosed first with prediabetes. In prediabetes, blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be considered type 2 diabetes. If someone has prediabetes, they can make lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Making these changes is important because high blood sugar can damage a person's body and cause other serious health problems, like heart disease, vision loss, and kidney disease.

## ☆ KEY POINTS

- 1. Know your health history.** There are several factors that might put you at risk of type 2 diabetes, from family history, to what you eat and how physically active you are, to whether or not you smoke, and more. It's important to understand the different risks of developing type 2 diabetes and how you can lower your risk.
- 2. Aim for some weight loss.** If you are overweight, a loss of 5% to 7% of your body weight can lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. That's 10 to 14 pounds for a person who weighs 200 pounds.
- 3. Establish healthy food habits and make healthy food choices.** Eating a variety of foods high in vitamins, minerals, water, and fiber while limiting high fat, high sugar, and high salt foods can help keep weight and blood sugar levels in check.
- 4. Move often.** Regular physical activity means getting at least 150 minutes a week of brisk walking or a similar activity. That's just 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Riding bicycles, hiking, or actively playing games and sports as a family are great ways to stay active.
- 5. Stop smoking.** Smoking increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. Find resources and smoking cessation programs at [Smokefree.Gov](https://www.smokefree.gov).

Support is essential for making and sustaining behavior change. The lifestyle change program offered through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [National Diabetes Prevention Program](#) (National DPP) can help people at risk of type 2 diabetes:

- Make realistic, lasting lifestyle changes with the support of a trained coach.
- Discover how to eat healthy and add more physical activity into a busy day.
- Manage stress, stay motivated, and solve problems that can slow progress.
- Get support from people with similar goals and challenges.

Between sessions, participants can also go online and engage with the National DPP's [Personal Success Tool](#). This tool can be accessed anytime, anywhere and supports the content of the lifestyle change program. It includes videos, activities, quizzes, and pledges that the participants can make to reach their goals.

As the leader of a *New Beginnings* group, you can share information on preventing type 2 diabetes and the lifestyle change program. In doing so, you can help support families in reducing their risks and stopping the cycle of type 2 diabetes.

## REFERENCES

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**

- [Prediabetes](#)
- [Prediabetes Risk Test](#)
- [Type 2 Diabetes](#)
- [On Your Way to Preventing Type 2 Diabetes](#)
- [Preventing Type 2 Diabetes in Kids](#)
- [National Diabetes Prevention Program](#)
  - [Lifestyle Change Program](#)
  - [Find a Program](#)
  - [Personal Success Tool](#)
  - [Path to Prevention](#)

### **National Institutes of Health:**

- [Preventing Type 2 Diabetes](#)
- [Your Game Plan to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes](#)

### **American Diabetes Association:**

- [Online Risk Test](#)
- [Diabetes Prevention](#)