



# Nutrition for Older Adults: Diet and Health Guidelines To Lower Risk Of Diabetes

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## What Is Diabetes

The body breaks down carbohydrates into glucose. Insulin helps glucose enter body cells to be used for energy.

In diabetes the body either does not make enough insulin, respond to insulin in the right way, or both. As a result, blood glucose levels stay high.

## Diabetes Complications

Over time, high blood glucose can damage blood vessels and nerves. This damage can lead to:

- Heart disease.
- High blood pressure.
- Kidney disease.
- Blindness.
- Infections.
- Amputations.

## Pre Diabetes

Excess weight can lower the body's ability to use insulin. The body makes insulin, but body cells resist the action of insulin. This is called insulin resistance.

At first, the cells in the pancreas that make insulin respond by making more insulin to keep blood glucose levels down. Slowly, these cells begin to wear out and

make less insulin. This may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Where excess weight is carried is a factor in insulin resistance. Excess weight carried in the upper body or abdomen is linked to insulin resistance.

## Type 1 Diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is less common. In type 1 diabetes, the body stops making insulin. A problem causes the body's immune system to attack and destroy the cells of the pancreas that make insulin.

Type 1 diabetes is controlled with diet, physical activity and medication. People with type 1 diabetes must take insulin to survive.

Symptoms of type 1 diabetes develop rapidly:

- Increased urination.
- Increased hunger.
- Increased thirst.
- Rapid weight loss.
- Feeling tired.
- Irritability.

## Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of diabetes. In type 2 diabetes, the

body does not make enough insulin or does not respond to insulin in the right way, or both.

Type 2 diabetes tends to develop after age 40 and with weight gain in the form of excess body fat.

- With age, the pancreatic cells that make insulin often begin to make less insulin.
- Excess body fat may increase the risk of insulin resistance.
- Type 2 diabetes is also being seen in overweight children.

Symptoms of type 2 diabetes develop slowly:

- Blurred vision.
- Skin infections and cuts heal slowly.
- Itchy skin.
- Tingling or numbness of feet.

Because symptoms develop slowly, people can have type 2 diabetes for many years and not know it. Some estimate that one-third of people with type 2 diabetes are unaware they have it.

Type 2 diabetes is often controlled with diet and physical activity. Medication may also be needed.

## Sources

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## Lowering Diabetes Risk

There are few recommendations for lowering the risk of type 1 diabetes.

The best recommendation for lowering the risk of type 2 diabetes is to maintain a healthy weight or moderate weight loss through:

- Healthy eating and
- Regular physical activity.
  - 150 minutes of moderate-intensity per week or
  - 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity per week.

## Diabetes Control

Controlling your blood glucose will help you feel better and can lower the risk of diabetes complications.

Blood glucose control is a balance of three things:

- Healthy eating.
- Physical activity.
- Medication (if needed).

There is no one diabetes control plan. Everyone needs a diabetes control plan that fits their own needs. See your doctor for your own diabetes control plan that meets your needs.

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