

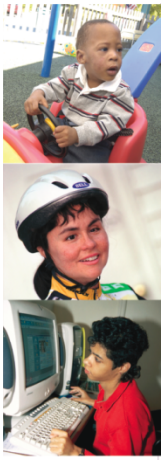
## Preventing and Managing Type 2 Diabetes

*"First, I didn't know what diabetes was, and then I was scared, but having help from people who care about me made me feel better."*



# DDS SafetyNet

PROMOTING CHOICE AND OPTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY  
FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



## Preventing and Managing Type 2 Diabetes

### Why should I be concerned about diabetes?

A person with a disability has a six times greater chance of developing diabetes than a person without a disability. By learning about diabetes, you can play a critical role in preventing and managing this disease.

### What happens in diabetes?

The food a person eats has a sugar called glucose (pronounced **gloo**-kose). Sugar is the body's main source of energy. The body makes insulin to move sugar from the blood into muscles and other cells.

**Diabetes** occurs when the body either can't make enough insulin or can't properly use the insulin it makes. Without enough insulin, the blood sugar level goes up. A high blood sugar level can make someone very sick. There are two major types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2, each causing high blood sugar levels in a different way.

In **type 1 diabetes**, the body can't make insulin so the blood sugar level goes up. Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in childhood and is treated with insulin injections.

In **type 2 diabetes**, the body still makes insulin, but the cells that need the insulin actually resist it. As a result, the blood sugar level goes up. The body produces more insulin and can lose its ability to make enough. Type 2 diabetes is the most common type. It is typically diagnosed in adulthood.

The good news is that type 2 diabetes often can be prevented by taking several simple steps:

- Keep weight under control.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Be physically active.

Even when diagnosed, the first line of defense in managing type 2 diabetes is taking these same simple steps.

### How is type 2 diabetes diagnosed?

People who have type 2 diabetes may not know it because the symptoms can take a long time to develop. Some people don't have any symptoms at all. Some of the more common symptoms are that the person:

- **feels tired or lacks energy all the time.**
- **urinates a lot.**
- **is always thirsty and drinks a lot.**

Other possible symptoms include sudden weight loss, blurry vision, constant hunger, numbness in the hands or feet, wounds that don't heal, frequent vaginal infections, and sexual and urologic complications.

If a person has any of these symptoms, they should see a doctor. The doctor can diagnose diabetes using a blood glucose test.

People who eat healthy foods, stay active, and get to a healthy weight have a good chance of bringing their blood sugar levels down. Some people with type 2 diabetes need medications or insulin to control their blood sugar levels.

### How can I help to prevent type 2 diabetes?

***Keeping weight under control is the most important thing a person can do to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. Diet and regular physical activity are the keys to keeping weight off and reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes.***



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**Keep weight under control!** Figuring out the Body Mass Index (BMI) is a way to determine a person's weight-related risk. To learn the BMI for a person you support – or for yourself – go online to [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm). You will be asked the person's height and weight, and the BMI will be automatically calculated. Adults with a BMI of 25 to 29 are *overweight*. Adults with a BMI of 30 or higher are *obese*.

**Either being overweight or obese puts the person at increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Both are a call to action!** Losing even a small amount of weight is a good place to start.

**Eat a healthy diet!** Plan ahead. Don't try and change everything all at once. Follow the *Tips for Eating Right*. Choose one thing and get started.

**Get active!** Regular physical activity is key to keeping weight off and to overall good health. A brisk walk for half an hour each day reduces risk! Walk, bike, or garden instead of watching TV – don't be a couch potato!

### What else puts people at risk of type 2 diabetes?

The chance of getting type 2 diabetes increases with other important risk factors over which a person has little or no control, including:

- Age over 40.
- A parent, sister, or brother with type 2 diabetes.
- Hispanic, African-American, Native American, and Asian ethnicity.
- Past history of gestational diabetes (having diabetes during pregnancy).

If someone has one or more of these risk factors, they need to be even more careful about controlling weight, eating healthy foods, and being physically active.

### What do I do if someone I support is diagnosed with type 2 diabetes?

As a support person, you are part of a team whose job is to help the individual learn about their diabetes and to help the individual control it. Here are ways you can be of help:

- Educate yourself! Learn about diabetes and share what you learn.
- Be an active listener. If needed, help the person get support for coping with their feelings.
- Encourage weight control and physical activity. Help the person make healthy food choices. Join in exercise.
- Know what the individual's treatment plan is and how you can support the plan.
- Learn what to do if a person has signs of their blood sugar being too high or too low.
- Be aware of and look for symptoms of possible complications.
- Work with family members and others who support the individual.

With care and support, a person with diabetes can lead a happy and healthy life. For provider and consumer tools to help with eating healthy foods, being physically active, and managing diabetes, go to <http://www.ddssafety.net>.

For more information and resources, go to <http://www.learningaboutdiabetes.org>.

### Tips for Eating Right!

- Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Choose whole grain breads, cereals, crackers, pasta, and brown rice.
- Vary protein sources. Eat lean meat, poultry without the skin, fish twice a week, and nuts and beans.
- Watch the portion size, especially for foods high in calories, fat, and added sugars.
- Switch to low-fat or fat-free milk.
- Drink more water, tea, or pure fruit juice instead of sugary sodas.
- Use food labels to help make healthy eating choices.
- Limit fast food.
- Take a walk, ride a bike, and get active. Turn off the TV!

Use this QSR to learn more about Type 2 Diabetes

