

Pre-diabetes

Why have I received this leaflet?

Your results of your recent blood test show that you have a raised level of sugar (glucose) in the blood. This is in a range that we call pre-diabetes. The range for pre-diabetes is a HbA1c reading of 42-47 mmols. Diabetes is when your HbA1c level is 48 mmols or higher.

Does this mean that I have diabetes?

No, pre-diabetes means that your blood sugars are higher than usual, but not high enough for you to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. It also means that you are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

The good news is that eating a healthy diet, losing weight (if you need to), and becoming more physically active will reduce your risk of developing diabetes and associated problems such as heart disease. With the right support up to 50% of cases of type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed.

What are the causes of pre-diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes happens because insulin can't work properly, so your blood sugar levels keep rising. When you have pre-diabetes your body is unable to process high levels of glucose normally however they haven't risen to diabetic levels.

Risk factors include:

- Age and ethnicity – you are more at risk if you're white and over 40 years, or over 25 years and African-Caribbean, Black African or South Asian.
- Family history – you're 2-6x more likely to get type 2 diabetes if you have a parent or sibling with diabetes.
- Blood pressure – you're more at risk if you have ever had high blood pressure.
- Weight – you're more at risk if you are carrying extra weight, especially if this weight is around the middle.
- Previous diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes).

What are the symptoms?

Pre-diabetes doesn't have any symptoms. If you start to have any of the symptoms of type 2 diabetes then it means you have probably developed it. Symptoms of diabetes are going to the toilet more often, feeling more tired, losing weight without trying, increased infections, delayed wound healing, blurred vision and feeling thirsty. If you develop any of these please speak to your GP or practice nurse as soon as possible.

What can I do to help myself?

By making dietary changes, increasing physical activity and losing weight, about half of type 2 diabetes cases can be prevented or delayed in some people.

1. **Manage your weight** – if you are overweight or obese, and at high risk of type 2 diabetes, losing just 5% of your body weight can significantly reduce your risk. Making healthier food choices and being more active are good ways to start making these changes.
2. **Eat a healthy and balanced diet** – there is no one special diet for all people with pre-diabetes. There are some useful websites with dietary advice at the end of this leaflet.

As a simple guide:

| Associated with reduced risk diabetes | Associated with increased risk diabetes |
|---|---|
| Fruit and vegetables, especially green leafy vegetables | Refined carbohydrates e.g. sugary snacks, white bread, sugary cereals |
| Wholegrains | Red and processed meats |
| Yoghurt and cheese | Potatoes |
| Unsweetened tea and coffee | Sugar sweetened drinks |

3. **Be more active** – this reduces your risk. Simple measures such as using stairs instead of the lift, going for a walk on your lunch break can all help. If you can, aim to do at least 30 minutes of exercise on 5 days per week. The level of exercise should be enough to make you breathe harder and faster.

Can I drink alcohol?

Yes, in moderation. Both men and women are advised to drink no more than 14 units per week. It is advised to have two consecutive alcohol-free days.

What monitoring do I need?

If you have pre-diabetes you will have your HbA1c level checked at least once a year to monitor if it is increasing.

Will my prediabetes progress?

Between 1 and 3 out of every 4 people with pre-diabetes will develop diabetes within 10 years. The good news is that up to 50% of people can prevent or delay their progression to diabetes with lifestyle changes.

Useful information

www.diabetes.org.uk/preventing-type-2-diabetes/prediabetes

www.diabetes.co.uk

If you have any questions about pre-diabetes, do discuss with your GP or practice nurse. For any questions about lifestyle changes you can discuss with our in-house Health and Wellbeing Team. Our Health and Wellbeing Team can help support you make healthy lifestyle changes. They are non-medical and cannot discuss your clinical diagnosis.