

# Be Active. Eat Well.

## Prevent and Control Type 2 Diabetes

A Guide for Older Adults

### Diabetes is a Serious Disease



Compared to others the same age, people with diabetes are ...

- ✓ 25 times more likely to become blind
- ✓ 17 times more likely to have kidney disease
- ✓ 20 times more likely to get gangrene
- ✓ 15 times more likely to need an amputation, and twice as likely to have a heart attack or stroke
- ✓ Older adults with diabetes are hospitalized 70% more often than other people

Source: Seniors and Diabetes: A Canadian Perspective, Division of Aging and Seniors, Health Canada, 1999.

### Check Your Risks

You could be one of many Canadians who have diabetes and don't know it.

#### Risk factors that cannot be changed are ...

- ✓ You are 45 or older
- ✓ Your family has a history of diabetes
- ✓ You are of Aboriginal, Asian, Hispanic, or African descent (high risk groups)
- ✓ You gave birth to a baby that weighed over 4 kg (9 lbs.), or had diabetes during pregnancy

### What is Type 2 Diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin or has difficulty using the insulin it produces. To use food as energy, the body needs insulin.

With little insulin, sugar builds up in the blood instead of being used as energy. High blood sugar levels can damage your blood vessels and nerves and lead to numerous complications.

### What You Can Do

You can prevent, delay or control type 2 diabetes by choosing a healthy lifestyle.

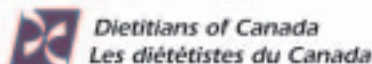
#### Risk factors that you can change ...

- ✓ Being overweight (especially if you carry most of your weight around the middle)
- ✓ Not being active
- ✓ Not eating well
- ✓ High cholesterol or high triglycerides
- ✓ Higher than normal blood sugar levels before breakfast (6.1 to 6.9 mmol/L)

If you are 45 or older, you should be tested for diabetes every three years. If you have two or more of these risks, you should be tested earlier or more often.

**Ask your physician about being tested for diabetes. If you have type 2 diabetes, test your blood sugar levels regularly.**

This information was produced in consultation with



## Active Living

Age is no barrier to a healthy, active lifestyle. Regular physical activity improves your general health and well-being. It also helps prevent and control type 2 diabetes.

### First Steps

- ✓ Make physical activities a part of your daily routine.
- ✓ Do activities you are doing now, just more of them.
- ✓ Walk whenever you can.
- ✓ Start slowly, build up gradually. Short bouts of activity, 10 minutes each, all add up.
- ✓ Most days of the week, aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity such as walking.
- ✓ Treat your feet. Get a good pair of shoes for walking.

Check with your doctor before beginning any new physical activity.

### Physical Activity Can ...

- ✓ Lower blood sugar
  - ✓ Lower blood pressure
  - ✓ Relieve tension and stress
  - ✓ Strengthen heart muscles
  - ✓ Increase lung capacity
  - ✓ Improve circulation
  - ✓ Improve sleep
  - ✓ Help maintain a healthy weight
  - ✓ Improve sexual interest
- And more ...



### A Walking Start

Walking is fun and easy. You can set your own pace. It's a great activity if you are busy or don't enjoy structured exercise. All you need are good walking shoes and clothing to suit the weather. Streets, parks, malls, and trails are all great places to walk.

## Did You Know?

Older adults with type 2 diabetes can be healthier than those without diabetes who don't eat well and are not physically active.

Many people have diabetes for years before diagnosis.

People who are physically active age at a slower rate.

### It's Never Too Late!

Lots of people have trouble getting started. Here are common reasons, and ideas to help you.

**I don't have much energy.**

Start slowly. Being physically active should give you energy, not take it away.

**It costs too much.**

Exercise at home. Try gardening, walking, or something else inexpensive or free.

**I don't feel motivated.**

Find a buddy. Walk with a friend. If you can't find a buddy, go to your local recreation centre.

**I don't feel confident.**

Try something that is easy and comfortable for you.

**I need support or partners.**

Join a club or class. Ask a neighbour or friend to join in.

**The weather is bad.**

Join a class. Go for a walk in the mall. Do exercises at home.

**I have knee and hip problems.**

Mild exercise can help. Follow your physician's advice and get help designing a program.

## Healthy Eating

Everyone needs to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Eating well is essential to keep you healthy. It also helps prevent and control type 2 diabetes.

### Try ...

- Eat at least every 4 to 6 hours. Make sure to eat regular meals and snacks.
- Limit sweets. For example: sugar, regular pop, desserts, candies, jam and honey.
- Limit high-fat items like fried foods, chips and pastries.
- Eat more high-fibre foods like whole grain breads and cereals, lentils, dried beans and peas, brown rice, fruits and vegetables.
- Drink water regularly all day long.

### Why?

- Eating regularly helps the body control blood sugar levels.
- The more sugar you eat, the more your body needs insulin to keep blood sugar levels normal.
- Eating too many high-fat foods can lead to weight gain and may lead to heart disease.
- Foods high in fibre may help control blood sugar, control cholesterol levels, help regularity.
- Water quenches thirst and prevents dehydration.



## The Good News

Type 2 diabetes can be prevented, delayed, or controlled. Make these healthy choices part of your lifestyle.

- ✓ Be physically active — every day!
- ✓ Maintain a healthy body weight.
- ✓ Control high blood pressure.
- ✓ Manage stress effectively.
- ✓ Don't smoke.
- ✓ Have yearly medical and dental check-ups.
- ✓ Follow a healthy, balanced eating pattern.

## Good Eating Habits

Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating includes a full plan for healthy eating.

- ✓ Enjoy a variety of foods from each food group every day.
- ✓ Choose lower-fat foods more often.
- ✓ Choose lower-fat dairy products, leaner meats, poultry and fish, and foods prepared with little or no fat.
- ✓ Choose fruits and vegetables more often.
- ✓ Keep between-meal or bedtime snacks small and nutritious.
- ✓ Limit salt, alcohol, caffeine and foods high in fat and sugar.

### If you have questions or concerns ...

talk to a Registered Dietitian. To find one in your area, ask your local public health unit, or visit the Dietitians of Canada website at

[www.dietitians.ca/find/index](http://www.dietitians.ca/find/index)

## The Symptoms of Diabetes Include ...

- ✓ Unusual thirst.
- ✓ Frequent urination.
- ✓ Unusual weight loss or change in appetite.
- ✓ Extreme fatigue or lack of energy.
- ✓ Blurred vision.
- ✓ Frequent or recurring infections.
- ✓ Cuts and bruises that are slow to heal.
- ✓ Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet.
- ✓ Impotence or sexual problems.

If you have any of these symptoms you should see your doctor as soon as possible.

## Complications

If left untreated or not managed properly, high blood sugar levels can damage the body's blood vessels and nerves. This can lead to ...

- blindness
- kidney failure
- heart attacks
- strokes
- poor circulation
- nerve damage
- amputations
- impotence and sexual difficulties

Early detection and good control of diabetes can reduce or prevent complications.

## Know the Numbers

A desirable blood sugar level for those with type 2 diabetes is ...

Before eating  
**4.0-7.0 mmol/L**

After eating (1 to 2 hrs.)  
**5.0-11.0 mmol/L**

Test your blood sugar level regularly to ensure good diabetes control.

## For more information contact ...

Your local branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association

1-800-BANTING or (416) 363-3373 [www.diabetes.ca/section\\_regional](http://www.diabetes.ca/section_regional)

Active Living Coalition for Older Adults 1-800-549-9799 or (416) 423-2163 [www.alcoa.ca](http://www.alcoa.ca)

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists [www.otworks.com](http://www.otworks.com)

Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging (519) 661-1603 [www.uwo.ca/actage](http://www.uwo.ca/actage)

Canadian Ethnocultural Council (613) 230-3867 [www.ethnocultural.ca](http://www.ethnocultural.ca)

Dietitians of Canada (416) 596-0857 [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)

National Aboriginal Diabetes Association (204) 927-1220 [www.nada.ca](http://www.nada.ca)

## National Resources (Free)

*Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults*  
1-888-334-9769 [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)

*Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*  
(613) 954-5995 [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition)

## Local Resources

- ✓ Your recreation department
- ✓ Your community health clinic/centre
- ✓ Your seniors centre