

What is pre-diabetes?

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According to the American Diabetes Association, an estimated 86 million Americans age 20 and older have pre-diabetes. "If you've been diagnosed with pre-diabetes, it means your blood sugar levels are not high enough to be classified as Type 2 diabetes but are high enough to indicate a need for change," says Anne Bauch, registered dietitian at Mayo Clinic Health System.

A normal fasting [blood sugar](#) level is below 100, whereas a level of someone with [pre-diabetes](#) is between 100 and 126. Once levels have surpassed 126, it is classified as Type 2 diabetes, which indicates that your body resists insulin or doesn't produce enough of it to maintain [normal blood sugar](#) levels.

"When you have pre-diabetes, sugar begins to build up in the blood stream rather than fuel your cells. This is when insulin resistance occurs, which is believed to be the No. 1 cause of pre-diabetes," adds Bauch.

A healthy weight allows insulin to work more efficiently and to keep blood sugars within a normal range. A healthy diet and regular exercise are the best ways to bring your blood sugar levels back to normal.

What are the risk factors for developing pre-diabetes?

- Body mass index (BMI) greater than 27
- Family history of diabetes
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Age 45 or older
- Carrying weight in your abdomen
- Previous diagnosis of gestational diabetes (developed while pregnant)

When should I be tested? If you're 45 or older,

you should have your fasting blood sugar checked every year during your physical. If you've had [gestational diabetes](#), it is important to have your blood sugar checked each year, as there is a 60 percent chance of developing Type 2 diabetes.

Are there any symptoms?

Often, people do not know they have pre-diabetes because they do not experience any symptoms. However, Type 2 diabetes symptoms may include:

- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Frequent urination
- Increased thirst

What's my next step?

"After diagnosis, a referral to a diabetes educator can be initiated to begin a carbohydrate control meal plan along with an exercise routine. Diabetes educators teach lifestyle skills to manage pre-diabetes and Type 2 diabetes. We help patients with meal planning, exercise, medication management and monitoring blood sugars," says Bauch.

Talk to your [health care provider](#) if you have any questions or concerns about diabetes or if you develop any Type 2 [diabetes](#) symptoms.

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