

Prediabetes

Part of the *Learning to Live Well with Diabetes* Series

Welcome! Just as with diabetes, a prediabetes diagnosis can feel overwhelming. There is so much to learn and so much to do. The **Learning to Live Well with Diabetes** series was created to share clear, practical information and resources to offer support without adding extra stress. Setting small, manageable goals over time can help relieve stress and lead to lasting health improvements, and you don't have to do it alone. Please take what is helpful to you on your journey and leave the rest.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact:

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What is Prediabetes

Prediabetes is a health condition that you can develop when your body is having difficulty keeping blood glucose, also called blood sugar, in a typical range. It means blood sugar is higher than normal but not yet high enough to be considered diabetes.



About one in three U.S. adults are estimated to have prediabetes. Research shows that 5–10% of people with prediabetes develop type 2 diabetes each year, and up to 70% may eventually progress to diabetes over their lifetime. The encouraging part is that, unlike diabetes, prediabetes is often reversible—small, steady changes in daily routines can make a big difference. Understanding what's happening in your body is the

first step toward preventing diabetes and building long-term health.

What Causes Prediabetes?

Prediabetes often develops because the body gradually becomes less efficient at managing blood sugar. Over time, cells may stop responding to insulin as well as they once did, pushing the pancreas to work harder. The liver can also release extra glucose into the bloodstream, especially overnight, and everyday factors like **chronic stress**, **poor sleep** or **low-grade inflammation** can make it harder for insulin to do its job. When body cells don't absorb glucose as well, blood sugar stays higher for longer. These subtle shifts can build up quietly, which is why understanding them—and catching them early—can make such a meaningful difference.

*For a more details on blood glucose, visit the **Diabetes Overview** segment of this series.*



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How is Prediabetes Diagnosed?

The American Diabetes Association defines the criteria for diagnosing prediabetes using the following tests:

A1C (HbA1c)

This blood test looks at how much sugar has been stuck to your red blood cells over the past 2–3 months. It gives a long-term picture of your average blood glucose, not just what it is on a single day.



Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG)

This checks your blood sugar after you haven't had anything to eat or drink (except water) for at least 8 hours. It shows how well your body controls glucose when you're in a "resting" or fasting state.

2-Hour Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT)

For this test, you have your blood sugar checked, drink a sweet glucose (sugar) drink, and then have it checked again 2 hours later. It shows how effectively your body handles a big load of sugar, which can reveal early problems with insulin response.

The table below shows the test result ranges that your health care provider will use to help diagnose prediabetes or diabetes:

Test	Prediabetes Range	Diabetes Range	Notes
A1C (HbA1c)	5.7% – 6.4%	≥ 6.5%	Reflects average blood glucose over ~3 months.
Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG)	100 – 125 mg/dL	≥ 126 mg/dL	Measured after at least 8 hours with no calories.
2-hour OGTT (75 g glucose load)	140 – 199 mg/dL	≥ 200 mg/dL	Measured 2 hours after a glucose drink.
Random Plasma Glucose	Not used for prediabetes diagnosis	≥ 200 mg/dL <i>with symptoms</i>	Used when someone has classic symptoms of high blood sugar.

Hearing you have prediabetes can stir up worry, frustration, or even a little shame—but your diagnosis is not your fault. Prediabetes develops silently over many years, influenced by things you can't fully control, like genetics, aging, and how your body happens to respond to insulin. The good news is that this diagnosis is also a powerful early signal. There is so much you can do—small, steady changes in daily routines can meaningfully lower your blood sugar and dramatically reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Your diagnosis has armed you with new information that you can use.

How Can I Reduce My Risk?

When you're ready to act, it helps to start **by setting intentional goals**. The most helpful goals are the ones that feel realistic and clearly defined— things you can picture yourself doing in the rhythm of your typical life. Instead of aiming for sweeping changes at once, try choosing one or two small habits to practice consistently, like adding a 10-minute walk after dinner a few times a week or including a vegetable with one meal each day. These types of specific, bite-sized goals build confidence and create momentum, and over time they add up to meaningful improvements in how your body manages blood sugar.

Try focusing your goals on some of these aspects of daily life. All of these can positively impact prediabetes and diabetes:

Post-meal movement

A few minutes of walking or light activity after eating helps soften blood sugar spikes.

Meal timing and consistency

Eating at fairly regular times keeps your body from swinging between long gaps and big glucose surges.

Fiber intake

Adding more vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds and whole grains slows digestion and helps your blood sugar rise more gently.

Stress management

Chronic stress hormones increase blood glucose; small practices like deep breathing, short breaks or mindfulness activities add up.

Sleep quality and routine

Getting enough restful sleep improves insulin response and lowers next day glucose levels.

Adding—not removing—foods

Focusing on what to include (like veggies, lean protein and healthy fats) often balances meals naturally.

Consistent physical activity

Regular movement—walking or jogging, rolling, basketball, yoga, dancing, anything enjoyable—helps muscles use glucose more efficiently.

Hydration

Staying hydrated helps your kidneys flush glucose and keeps your body running smoothly.

Are you ready to act? The *Learning to Live Well with Diabetes* series Goal Setting Tool can help you get started! (If you're not feeling quite ready, it can help with that, too.)

The logo for My Healthy Vermont, featuring the words "MY HEALTHY VERMONT" in white, uppercase letters on a green rectangular background.

DID YOU KNOW? My Healthy Vermont offers FREE diabetes prevention workshops. Visit www.myhealthylvt.org to learn more or register.