

# Are You at Risk for Type 2 Diabetes?

## Four Easy Tips for Prevention

By Marc Jaffe, M.D., Kaiser Permanente

**Diabetes affects more than 20 million people in the United States and many of those who have diabetes are older adults.**

A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that baby boomers — born between 1946 and 1964 — are more likely to be obese and have diabetes compared to their parents, despite significant medical advances during baby boomers' lifetimes.

The good news is older adults can take steps to prevent the more common Type 2 diabetes.

"We know based on a large clinical trial, the Diabetes Prevention Program, that the best way to prevent Type 2 diabetes is through making healthy lifestyle choices," said Marc Jaffe, M.D., Kaiser Permanente endocrinologist. "Even small changes can make a difference and it is never too late to start making healthier choices."

Below are a few basic questions, answers and tips to help you understand and prevent diabetes.

### What Is Type 2 Diabetes and Why Should I Care?

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic condition. It prevents your body from turning food into energy. Diabetes can lead to heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure and amputation.



### How Do I Know If I'm At Risk For Developing Diabetes?

Risk factors for Type 2 diabetes include having prediabetes, being age 45 or older, having a family history of diabetes, being overweight, not



exercising regularly, having high blood pressure, having low HDL (also known as "good" cholesterol) and/or high levels of triglycerides, being a member of certain racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and American Indians and Alaska Natives), and being a woman who had diabetes during pregnancy.

### How Do I Prevent Diabetes?

#### 1) Stay at a Healthy Weight

A healthy weight is one that is right for your body type and height and is based on your body mass index (BMI) and the size of your waist. Losing as little as five or 10 pounds can make a big difference in your risk of developing diabetes and can also improve your blood pressure, cholesterol, mood and self-confidence. Maintaining your weight is also important because the natural tendency is to gain weight as you age. So if you don't gain weight, that's a victory too.

#### 2) Exercise Regularly

Exercise 150 minutes a week. Try walking 30 minutes a day at least five days every week. It's fine to be active in blocks of 10 minutes or more throughout your day and week. If you're able, walk the stairs instead

of taking the elevator. It's wise to check with your physician before starting an exercise program

#### 3) Eat Healthy

Eat a balanced diet, including whole grains, lean sources of protein and vegetables. Lose weight if you need to by eating fewer calories and exercising more. For example, try having a salad instead of pizza.

#### 4) Quit Smoking

Although tobacco does not increase the chances of diabetes, it can increase the chances of heart attack and stroke so it is especially important to avoid tobacco if you are also at risk of developing diabetes.

To learn more about diabetes, visit [kp.org](http://kp.org) and click the health and wellness tab. Also, check out [kp.org/carestories](http://kp.org/carestories) for videos about diabetes and other conditions. For questions and advice about a specific condition, talk with your physician.

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