



# Spain

*Espíritu de las mujeres*

## Take Steps Against Diabetes: What You Can Do NOW

Every day, more than 5,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with diabetes. Nearly 26 million Americans have diabetes, and millions more could develop it within the next few years.

That's the bad news. The good news is that there are many simple steps you can take to protect yourself from diabetes. If you already have it, there are ways to help avoid complications such as nerve damage, heart disease, blindness, and kidney failure. If you don't have it, there are ways to prevent or delay its onset.

Here are some suggestions from the medical team at [Name of Hospital] to fend off diabetes and its complications and to boost your overall health:

- ✓ Determine whether you are at risk for developing diabetes. Risk factors include:
  - Being overweight or obese
  - Age (45 or older)
  - A family history of diabetes
  - Excess belly fat
  - A diagnosis of pre-diabetes
  - Inactivity (exercising fewer than three times a week)
  - Certain ethnic backgrounds (African American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic American/Latino)
  - High blood pressure (140/90 or higher)
  - Low HDL ("good") cholesterol (35 or lower)
  - High triglycerides (250 or higher)

- Pregnancy
- A history of gestational diabetes or giving birth to a large baby (9 pounds or more)
- Insulin resistance
- Cardiovascular disease or polycystic ovary syndrome

- ✓ If you are overweight or obese, try to lose weight. Having excess body fat can prevent your body from making and using insulin properly. Losing even a small amount of weight can offer some diabetes protection.
- ✓ Ask your doctor about having your blood sugar checked. Usually, doctors order diabetes blood tests for patients who are 45 or older and/or who have diabetes risk factors.
- ✓ Eat a diet that contains healthy amounts of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and low-fat dairy foods.

### Be on the lookout for diabetes symptoms. They include:

- ✓ Check any of the symptoms you may be experiencing and share with your doctor.
- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Unexplained weight loss
- Sudden vision changes
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Fatigue
- Very dry, itchy skin
- Sores that are slow to heal
- More infections than usual, especially in the skin, gums, bladder, or vagina
- Confusion or dizziness
- Breath that smells like nail polish remover
- Darkening of skin around the neck or in the armpits
- An absence of menstrual periods
- Unexplained nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain

- ✓ Eat foods that are high in fiber, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, and seeds. These foods help keep blood sugar stable.
- ✓ Choose a rainbow of nutrient-packed fruits and vegetables—fresh, frozen, or canned without any added sugar.
- ✓ Avoid sugary drinks. They are a major contributor to the obesity epidemic in the U.S. Instead of soda and sweetened iced tea, choose water, seltzer, unsweetened tea, or other sugar-free beverages.
- ✓ Get up and move. Exercise helps cut diabetes risk by helping with weight control, lowering blood sugar, and helping your body use insulin more effectively.
- ✓ Pick activities you enjoy, and you'll be more likely to stick with them. Consider walking, cycling, swimming, dancing, joining an exercise class, or using exercise machines.
- ✓ Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate exercise five or more days per week. If you use a pedometer, set a daily goal of 10,000 steps.
- ✓ If you're sedentary, start slowly and build up over time. Any activity is better than none.
- ✓ Get enough sleep, and talk with your doctor if you're having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Sleep disorders can raise diabetes risk.
- ✓ Avoid stress when you can. When you can't avoid it, cope with it by using relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, visualization, exercise, and social support.
- ✓ If you smoke, ask your doctor for help quitting. Smokers are 50 percent more likely than non-smokers to develop diabetes.
- ✓ See your doctor regularly. Many people now have access to free annual wellness visits and preventive care for diabetes.

## Diabetes Words to Know

### What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood build up and remain high. Over time, high blood sugar can cause damage to nerves, organs, and cells.

### What is pre-diabetes?

People with pre-diabetes have blood sugar levels that are higher than they should be, but not high enough to be considered diabetes.

### What is blood sugar?

When you eat and digest food, your body breaks down most of what you've eaten into glucose, a type of sugar that your body uses for fuel. The glucose in your blood is referred to as blood glucose, or blood sugar.

### What is insulin?

Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas and secreted into the blood. Insulin helps blood sugar to enter the cells in order to be used as fuel for the cells.

### What is insulin resistance?

Insulin resistance occurs when cells don't respond to insulin as well as they should, which prevents some blood sugar from entering the cells and allows it to build up in the blood instead.

- ✓ If you have diabetes, follow the health-boosting steps listed here and keep your disease in control by doing the following:
  - Control your blood sugar
  - Have your blood sugar checked as recommended by your doctor
  - Control your blood pressure and blood lipids
  - Follow your doctor's recommendations about using diabetes medications
  - Ask your doctor to refer you to a diabetes educator who can help you learn more about taking care of your health.
- ✓ To find out more about protecting yourself from diabetes, contact your doctor or the following organizations:
  - American Diabetes Association ([www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org))
  - A registered dietitian or certified diabetes educator ([www.ncbde.org](http://www.ncbde.org))
  - National Diabetes Education Program ([www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov))