What is type 2 diabetes? Why is it harmful?

- Type 2 diabetes is the most common kind of diabetes.
- In type 2 diabetes, the body doesn’t make enough insulin. Or the insulin doesn’t work properly.
- Insulin is a hormone that helps your body use food. When you digest food, the food is broken down into glucose. Glucose is a kind of sugar. The blood carries the glucose to all the cells in your body. Insulin allows the glucose to get into your cells, which use it for energy.
- What if you don’t have enough insulin? Or what if your body doesn’t use insulin properly? The glucose builds up in your blood. This is called “high blood sugar.”
- High blood sugar harms the nerves and blood vessels. Over a long period of time, it can cause gum infections, blindness, amputation, kidney failure, nerve problems, heart attack, and stroke.
- The earlier you find out if you have diabetes the better. You can get treatment to prevent damage to your body.

What are the symptoms of type 2 diabetes?

It is important to keep in mind that you may have diabetes and not know it. In fact, this is true for nearly 6 million people in the United States. Many have no symptoms. Or the symptoms are so mild that they go unnoticed. Symptoms of type 2 diabetes may include:

- Increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Fatigue
- Increased urination, especially at night
- Weight loss
- Blurred vision
- Sores that do not heal

Who is at risk for type 2 diabetes?

You are at risk for type 2 diabetes if you have one or more of these risk factors:

- Are overweight or obese
- Exercise fewer than three times a week
- Are 45 years old or older
- Have a parent, sister, or brother with diabetes
- Are African-American, an Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic/Latino
- Had diabetes during pregnancy
- Delivered at least one baby weighing more than 9 pounds
- Have polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) (women only)
Have high blood pressure (140/90 mm Hg or above)
• Have high cholesterol levels
• Have a dark, velvety rash around your neck or armpits
• Have a history of heart disease

What is pre-diabetes?
Pre-diabetes means your blood glucose is higher than normal but lower than the diabetes range. If you have pre-diabetes, you are at high risk for getting type 2 diabetes. But you can still reduce your chances of getting diabetes and even lower your blood glucose to normal if you take the steps below.

How can I prevent diabetes?
Studies have shown that the steps below can help prevent diabetes, even if you are at high risk. Check those that you would be willing to try:

• Lose a modest amount of weight if you are overweight.
  ❑ Aim to lose 1–2 pounds per week.
  ❑ Set a long-term goal of losing 5–10 percent of your starting weight. That’s about 10–20 pounds for most people.
  ❑ Weigh yourself at least once a week.
  ❑ Eat smaller amounts of food.
  ❑ Avoid fatty and sugary foods and drinks.
  ❑ Be more active.

• Make wise food choices. Avoid oversized portions.
  ❑ Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit; ¼ with cooked dried beans/peas/lentils, fish, poultry, or lean meat; and ¼ with whole grains, such as brown rice or whole wheat pasta.
  ❑ Limit fats to 1–2 teaspoons of oil or tub margarine per meal.
  ❑ Eat 3 servings of nonfat or low-fat (1%) dairy foods per day. One serving is 1 cup of nonfat/1% milk or yogurt or 1–2 ounces of low-fat cheese.
  ❑ Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

• Be physically active every day.
  ❑ Aim for at least 150 minutes per week of a moderate activity like brisk walking, biking on level ground, or general gardening. Or get 75 minutes per week of a vigorous activity like aerobic dance, swimming laps, or jogging.
  ❑ Also do strength-training exercises twice a week.
  ❑ New to exercise? Start with walking as little as five minutes a day and build up slowly over time. Every minute counts!

(continued on next page)
• If you have high blood pressure:
  - **Eat 4–5 cups of fruits/vegetables and 3 servings of nonfat or 1% milk/yogurt/cheese per day.** These foods are rich in nutrients. When consumed daily, they help lower blood pressure. They are part of the DASH diet. DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. For more about DASH, go to http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf.
  - **Reduce your intake of sodium and alcohol.**
    - Choose fresh foods instead of processed foods or fast food.
    - Use herbs and salt-free seasonings instead of salt.
    - Compare sodium in foods like soup, breads, and frozen meals — and choose the foods with lower numbers.
    - Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day if you are a woman or two drinks per day if you are a man.
  - **Talk with your doctor about medicines to control your blood pressure.**

Do you have high cholesterol? Talk with your doctor about lifestyle changes and medicines to lower it.

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## Take Action

Choose one of the ways to prevent diabetes listed above. Make a plan below to put it into action next week.

*Be specific. Break it into small steps.* For example, “I will take a 15-minute brisk walk on my lunch hour on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.”

During the next week I will:

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________