

Every Family Has Secrets! Could Diabetes Be One of Them?



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Do you know your family's health history? Or is it like a secret no one wants to talk about? Many health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, run in families. Many people who get type 2 diabetes have one or more family members with the disease.

Almost 24 million Americans have diabetes, a serious disease in which blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are above normal. Most people with diabetes have type 2, which used to be called adult-onset diabetes. At one time, type 2 diabetes was more common in people over age 45. But now more young people, even children, have the disease because many are overweight or obese.

Knowing the health history of your siblings, parents, and blood relatives is important because it gives you and your health care team information about your risk for developing health problems, such as type 2 diabetes. You can't change your family history, but knowing about it can help you work with your health care team to take action on things you can change. Studies have shown that you can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes by losing 5 to 7 percent of your weight, if you are overweight—that's 10 to 14 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds. You can lose weight by walking 30 minutes a day for five days a week and choosing healthy foods lower in fat and calories.

The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP), which is jointly sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National

Institutes of Health, urges everyone to explore their family health history and make a family plan to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.

1. **Ask around.** Talk to your relatives to find out if anyone has diabetes. If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, tell your family.
2. **Update your health care team on your family history.** Talk to your health care team about whether you should be screened for diabetes. It is important to find out early if you have diabetes so you can take steps to manage the disease. People who keep their blood glucose (sugar) as close to normal as possible in the early years after they are diagnosed with diabetes have fewer problems with their eyes, nerves, and kidneys, and fewer heart attacks later in life.
3. **Make a healthy eating plan for the whole family.** The plan should include:
 - Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products,
 - Choosing lean meats, poultry without the skin, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts, and
 - Foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.
4. **Get Moving.** Make physical activity a family affair. Go for a walk, or play soccer, basketball, or tag with your children. Try swimming, biking, hiking, jogging, or any activity that you enjoy. Vary your activities so you don't get bored.

Don't let diabetes be your family secret. Make a family plan to work together to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. If someone in your family has diabetes, ask how family members can support them.

For More Information

Check out NDEP's free resources for more ideas on how to lower your risk for type 2 diabetes. Order the *Small Steps. Big Rewards. Your GAME PLAN to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes* booklet and other resources by calling 1-888-693-NDEP (6337) or visit www.YourDiabetesInfo.org.