

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes

There are a number of risk factors that increase a person's risk for developing prediabetes and, ultimately, type 2 diabetes. Some of these characteristics are beyond a person's control, such as:

- **Family history**
If you have a blood relative with diabetes, your risk for developing it is significantly increased. Map out your [family history tree](#) (PDF) and take it to your doctor to find out what it means for you.
- **Race or ethnic background**
If you are of African-American, Asian-American, Latino/Hispanic-American, Native American or Pacific Islander descent, you have a greater likelihood of developing diabetes.
- **Age**
The older you are, the higher your risk. Generally, type 2 diabetes occurs in middle-aged adults, most frequently after age 45. However, health care providers are diagnosing more and more children and adolescents with type 2 diabetes.
- **History of gestational diabetes**
If you developed diabetes during pregnancy or delivered a baby over 9 lbs., you are at increased risk.

Modifiable Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes

While some things that contribute to the development of diabetes are beyond a person's control, there are also a number of modifiable risk factors. By making healthy changes in these areas, people can reduce their risks or delay the development of diabetes and improve their overall quality of life.

- **Overweight/obesity**
About 50 percent of men and 70 percent of women who have diabetes are obese. If you are 20 percent or more over your optimal body weight, you have a higher risk of developing diabetes. Losing five to seven percent of your body weight can cut your risk of developing prediabetes in half, and your risk decreases even more as you lose more weight. Learn how to [manage your weight](#).
- **Physical inactivity**
Along with overweight/obesity, physical inactivity ranks among the top modifiable risk factors for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. By achieving 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 90 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity or a combination of the two, you can improve your health and minimize risks for diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- **High blood pressure (hypertension)**
In addition to causing damage to the cardiovascular system, untreated high blood pressure has been linked to the development of diabetes. Learn more about [high blood pressure](#) and how to [control it](#).
- **Abnormal cholesterol (lipid) levels**
Low HDL "bad" cholesterol" and/or high triglycerides can increase the risk for Type 2 diabetes. Both of these abnormalities can also increase your risk for cardiovascular disease. A healthy eating plan, sufficient aerobic physical activity, and a healthy weight can help improve abnormal lipids. Sometimes medications are necessary.

By following our [healthy living tips](#), you can take control of these modifiable risk factors, prevent or delay the development of diabetes, and improve your quality of life.

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