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You can lower your risk of developing diabetes

What is diabetes, anyway?

The hormone insulin helps glucose — sugar — get into the cells of our bodies. This glucose gives your body energy.

But when you have diabetes, your body either does not make enough insulin or cannot use its own insulin as well as it should. Sugar builds up in the blood instead of being used by your body.

If it's not treated, diabetes can cause serious conditions, such as heart disease, blindness and kidney disease.

You can reduce your risk

There are lots of ways you can cut your risk of developing diabetes.

Here are three good ways to get started:

- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Add more activity to your day.
- Don't smoke.

More helpful tips

Checkups. Diabetes can affect anyone. That's one reason it's so important to see your doctor regularly. And, of course, follow any advice or treatment plans suggested.

Food choices. You can lower your risk by eating more fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And try to reduce foods made with refined flours and added sugar.

You should also try to eat foods that are low in saturated fat, cholesterol and salt.

Be careful what you drink

Cutting back on fruit juices and sugary soda is a good idea. Maybe reach for a glass of water instead. Or try a fresh orange in place of that glass of orange juice.

Limiting how much alcohol you drink can also lower your risk.

Watch for these warning signs

Diabetes is common. But you can't be sure you have it unless you are tested.

Talk with your doctor if you have any common symptoms, like:

- Frequent urination
- Increased thirst
- Cuts that don't heal
- Blurry vision
- Weight loss, even if you're eating a lot more

Your doctor can also help by telling you whether your family's history puts you more at risk. And what you can do to stay as healthy as you can.

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