

## Type 2 diabetes: Reducing your risk and eating well

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### What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is a common condition that causes blood sugar levels to become too high. Symptoms include excessive thirst, needing to pee a lot and tiredness. It can lead to more serious problems by causing damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys and nerves.

Type 2 diabetes is commonly associated with being overweight or inactive. Eating a healthy diet and keeping active will help you manage your blood sugar level as well as controlling your weight. Further advice is provided in this factsheet.



### What is prediabetes?

You may have heard the term prediabetes being used by health professionals or in the media. Prediabetes is used to describe people with an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. It means that the blood sugar is higher than usual but not high enough to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

### Facts and figures

According to Diabetes UK someone is diagnosed with diabetes every 2 minutes<sup>1</sup>. One in 10 people over the age of 40 in the UK has type 2 diabetes. It is estimated that almost 1 million people are living with type 2 diabetes, who don't know they have it as they haven't been diagnosed<sup>1</sup>.

### Risk Factors

You are more at risk of developing type 2 diabetes if you<sup>2</sup>:

- Are aged over 40 and white, or aged over 25 if you are African-Caribbean, black African or south Asian.
- Have a close relative (parent, brother, sister or child) with diabetes.
- Are of south Asian, African-Caribbean or black African descent.
- Are overweight or obese, particularly if you are large around the middle.
- Have ever had high blood pressure.

You can find out your risk of type 2 diabetes using the online tool from Diabetes UK here:

<http://bit.ly/Kn0wYourR1sk>

### Prevention

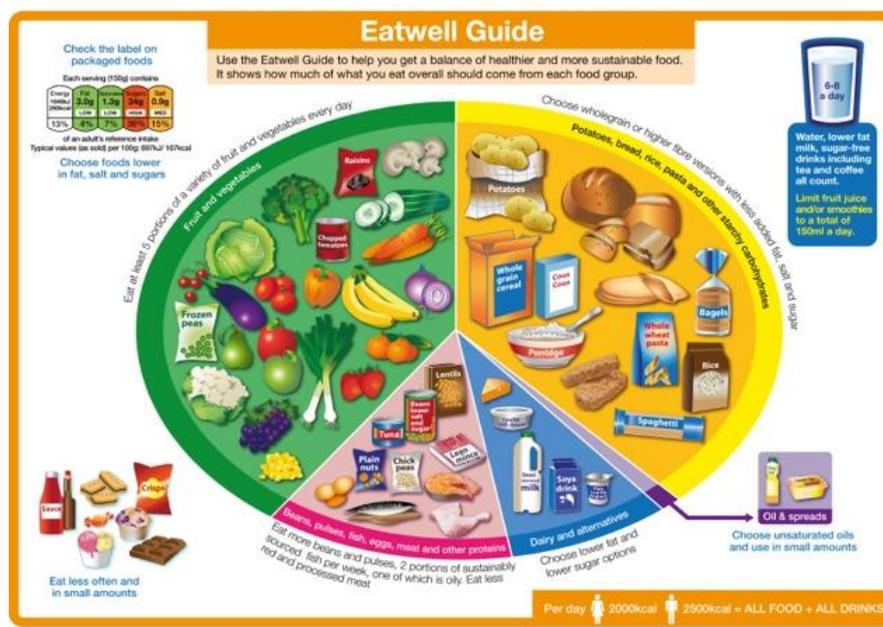
It has been proven that simple lifestyle measures are effective in preventing or delaying the onset of type 2 diabetes. The best ways to help prevent type 2 diabetes include:

- achieve and maintain a healthy body weight;
- be physically active (at least 30 minutes of regular, moderate-intensity activity on most days);
- eat a healthy balanced diet, avoiding too many foods with sugars and saturated fats; and
- avoid tobacco use (smoking increases the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease).

### Eating well with type 2 diabetes

The same principles of healthy eating apply for people with diabetes as for any individual. The Eatwell Guide<sup>3</sup> is a useful tool with recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet. The Eatwell guide states:

- Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Try to include a variety of fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned and dried) they all count!
- Base your meals on starchy carbohydrates such as potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy carbohydrates. Where possible choose wholegrain options.
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein foods. Aim for at least two portions of fish each week, 1 of which should be oily, such as salmon or mackerel.
- Include some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks and yoghurts) in your diet, preferably with a lower fat and sugar content.
- As far as the oils and spreads are concerned choose unsaturated oils and spreads (such as vegetable, rapeseed, olive or sunflower oils) and eat in small amounts.
- Try to limit foods high in fat, salt and sugar (such as biscuits, chocolate, and crisps). These types of foods should be eaten less often and in small amounts.
- Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid daily including water, tea, coffee, lower fat milk and sugar-free drinks. Limit consumption of fruit and vegetable juices and smoothies to 150ml per day, as these contain free sugars that can damage teeth.
- Checking the food labels can help you make better choices and support you to eat healthily. Our Factsheet on *Food Labels* has more information on this.



References

1. Diabetes UK (2019). Available: [https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about\\_us/news/new-stats-people-living-with-diabetes](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about_us/news/new-stats-people-living-with-diabetes)
2. Diabetes UK, Diabetes Risk Factors. Available: <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/preventing-type-2-diabetes/diabetes-risk-factors>
3. Public Health England, Eatwell Guide (2018). Available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>