

Have a Holiday Heart-to-Heart

Look at Your Family's Past to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes in Your Future

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The holidays are known as a time for family gatherings, catching up with relatives, and sometimes even the occasional family conflict. Like drama at the holiday dinner table, in many ways your health is influenced by your family—for better or for worse. This year, why not start a conversation that benefits everyone? Gather your family health history.

Why It's Important

Family history of disease is an important part of understanding your chance for developing a number of serious diseases, including type 2 diabetes. Diabetes is a serious disease that, if left untreated, can lead to serious health problems including blindness, loss of limb, kidney failure, heart disease, and early death. In fact, most people with type 2 diabetes have a family member—such as a mother, father, brother, or sister—with the disease.

The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) encourages all families to gather their family health history this holiday season and help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes in future generations.

Once you learn about your family health history, share it with your health care team, and take important steps to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. Studies show that losing 10-15 pounds, if you are overweight, by walking 30 minutes a day at least 5 days a week, and following a low-fat, low calorie meal plan are action steps to help prevent or delay the disease.

Four Questions You Should Ask

The answers to these key questions could help you prevent type 2 diabetes in your future.

- Does anyone in the family have type 2 diabetes? Who has type 2 diabetes?
- Has anyone in the family been told they might get diabetes?
- Has anyone in the family been told they need to lower their weight or increase their physical activity to prevent type 2 diabetes?
- Did your mother get diabetes when she was pregnant? This condition is also known as gestational (jes-TAY-shun-al) diabetes.

If the answer to any of these is yes, or you have a mother, father, brother, or sister with type 2 diabetes, you may be at an increased risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Talk to your doctor and visit to learn more about managing your risk and preventing or delaying type 2 diabetes.

Other Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes

In addition to having a family history of diabetes, there are other factors that increase your risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Be sure to talk with your health care team about your chance of developing type 2 diabetes and whether you should be tested, if you:

- are age 45 or older
- are overweight or obese
- exercise less than 3 times a week
- have other health problems such as high blood pressure
- had gestational diabetes (jes-TAY-shun-al) diabetes when you were pregnant, or gave birth to a baby weighing 9 pounds or more
- have prediabetes, which means your blood sugar is higher than normal, but not high enough to be called diabetes
- are an African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian American, or Pacific Islander

For more ways to lower your risk for type 2 diabetes, check out NDEP's [Choose More than 50 Ways to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes](#) available at www.YourDiabetesInfo.org or call 1-888-693-NDEP (1-888-693-6337), TTY: 1-866-569-1162.

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