

Live Healthier and Lower Your Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

Did you know that simply by living a healthier lifestyle, you could dramatically reduce the possibility of developing type 2 diabetes?

In fact, recent studies by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) report that by engaging in physical activity, eating a healthier diet, maintaining an appropriate body weight, limiting alcohol consumption and not smoking you can cut your risk of diabetes by as much as 80 percent.

November is American Diabetes Month and OAOHN would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to care for yourself, and your loved ones, by reminding you of the importance of preventive care.

NIH studies show that having a body weight appropriate for your height and age by itself reduced the risk of developing diabetes by 60 to 70 percent. Eating a healthier diet reduced the risk by about 15 percent and not smoking lowered the risk by about 20 percent.

Here are some tips from the NIH and the National Diabetes Education Program to help you make gradual lifestyle changes that can help you prevent type 2 diabetes:

If you are overweight, set a weight loss goal you can meet (check in with your doctor before starting any weight loss plan).

- Aim to lose about five to seven percent of your current weight and keep it off
- Keep track of your daily food intake and physical activity in a logbook and review it daily
- For support, invite family and friends to get involved

Make healthier food choices every day.

- Keep healthier snacks, such as fruit and vegetables, at home and at work
- Pack healthier lunches for you and your family
- Choose low-fat dairy products
- Eat whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, brown rice, pasta or oatmeal
- Select lean meats and poultry
- Choose more fish, beans, peas, nuts and seeds as protein sources

Strive to become more physically active. It's easy to build physical activity into your day:

- Take a brisk walk during lunchtime
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or park farther away from your office
- Join a community program like The YMCA as a family and choose activities that everyone can enjoy

Restrict alcohol consumption. Your risk of developing type 2 diabetes rises with an increase in alcohol consumption - limit yourself to no more than one drink a day

If you smoke, quit (and don't quit quitting). Smokefree.gov offers some great tips and a step-by-step guide on how to begin.

Be sure to embrace a healthy spirit. According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), high levels of stress can have negative effects on your blood sugar levels. That's why it's important to practice good relaxation techniques. The ADA recommends the following:

- Breathing exercises – Sit or lie down and uncross your legs and arms. Take in a deep breath. Then push out as much air as you can then relax your muscles. Do these exercises for a minimum of five minutes at least once a day.
- Replace negative thoughts with positive ones – If a negative thought is going through your mind, replace it with something that makes you happy or peaceful. You may also visualize a favorite nature scene to lessen anxiety and promote more serenity.

Last, but not least, getting annual physicals and tests from your doctor is key in sustaining your health and helping prevent diseases like diabetes. Having a Primary Care Physician (PCP) who can coordinate your care is vital to your good health. A PCP typically specializes in Family Medicine, Internal Medicine or General Practice.

If you don't have a PCP, finding one is easy! Just visit your insurance carrier's website, look for the "find a doctor" area and follow the instructions.