

Ten Ways African Americans Can Prevent Type 2 Diabetes

by the [National Diabetes Education Program](#)



The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) is urging people at high risk for type 2 diabetes to take small steps to lower their risk for the disease and serious complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, nerve damage, and other health problems. Take the first step today. Ask your health care team if you are at risk for type 2 diabetes. Before a person develops type 2 diabetes, they usually have “pre-diabetes,” which means their blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be called diabetes. People with pre-diabetes are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years and to have a heart attack or stroke.

Although African Americans are at high risk for type 2 diabetes, there is good news. You can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes by making small lifestyle changes in diet and physical activity. Follow these tips to help you prevent or delay type 2 diabetes:

1. **Set goals you can meet and start by making small changes.** First, set a goal you can achieve. Add one or two healthy changes every week. Use NDEP’s [Your GAME PLAN to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes booklet](#) to help you stick to your goals and succeed.
2. **Aim to lose at least 5 to 7 percent of your current weight – that’s 10 to 14 pounds for a 200-pound person.** The key to preventing type 2 diabetes is to lose weight by making healthy food choices and being physically active. Lose a small amount of weight by getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day, five days a week and eating foods lower in calories and fat.
3. **For support, team up with friends and family to help you lower your risk for type 2 diabetes.** Ask your family and friends to help you stick to your program. Involve them in your activities. You can help each other move more, eat less, and live a healthier life. Be active with your family by going on a walk together after dinner or playing a pick-up game of basketball. Replace watching TV with an activity that gets everyone moving.
4. **Make healthy food choices every day.** Start with small changes, like ordering the smallest size meal instead of the larger, super-sized version at fast-food restaurants. Choose carbs that have lots of fiber such as fresh fruits and vegetables from every color of the rainbow—red, orange, yellow, white, green, blue, and purple. Eat calcium-rich foods such as low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese.
5. **Make time to prepare and cook healthy foods.** Freeze portions so you have healthy meals ready for days when you’re too tired or don’t have time to cook. Instead of fried chicken, try it grilled, baked, or broiled. Use vegetable or canola oil when you choose to fry. For a main dish, try low-fat macaroni and cheese served with your favorite vegetable and a salad. A baked sweet potato topped with reduced-fat or fat-free sour cream is a good option for a side dish.

6. **Cut down on food portion sizes.** The portion size that you are used to eating may be equal to two or three standard servings – which equals double or triple the calories and fat! Portion sizes are often smaller than you think. Compare serving sizes to everyday objects. For example, one serving of cereal is about the size of a closed fist. Three ounces of lean meat or fish is about the size of a deck of cards.
7. **Choose water to drink instead of sweetened fruit drinks and soda.** Find a water bottle you really like from your church, community organization, or favorite sports team and drink water from it wherever and whenever you can. Drink a glass of water 10 minutes before your meal to take the edge off your hunger.
8. **Increase your activity level by walking more often.** Schedule “walking dates” with friends or family members throughout the week. Organize a walking group with your neighbors, co-workers, or church members. Take your dog – or a friend’s dog – for a brisk walk.
9. **Build physical activity into your day.** Show the younger people in your life the dances you used to do when you were their age. Turn up the music and jam to the beat of NDEP’s [Step by Step CD](#) or your favorite music while doing household chores. Take the stairs instead of the elevator to your office. Deliver a message in person to a co-worker instead of sending an email.
10. **For more ways to lower your risk for type 2 diabetes, check out NDEP’s free resources.** Order the [More Than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes tip sheet](#) for African Americans and other resources by calling 1-888-693-NDEP (6337) or visit <http://www.YourDiabetesInfo.org> and click on the [Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent Type 2 Diabetes. campaign.](#)

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