

Ten Ways American Indians 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 American Indians 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 by eating fiber-rich foods such as corn, beans, and whole grain breads. Read the Nutrition Facts label on foods to make sure grains like corn are referred to as “whole” grains. 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. Cook with less oil and butter. Instead, stir-fry, broil, or bake with non-stick spray or low-sodium broth. For a main dish, try chili prepared with lean beef stew meat, kidney beans, and tomatoes. Squash, pumpkin, and beans can be good choices for a vegetable 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, such as one that represents your 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 or co-workers. Take your dog – or a friend’s dog – for a brisk walk.
9. **Build physical activity into your day.** Get up, get out, and get moving. Try dancing, bike riding, swimming, or playing ball. 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 [We Have the Power to Prevent Diabetes tip sheet](#) for American Indians 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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