

How Can You Prevent Diabetes?

Being told that you have diabetes or prediabetes can be overwhelming and scary. November is National Diabetes and this article will focus on prediabetes.

Prediabetes is a warning sign that you are at higher risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. Prediabetes is when your blood sugar level is higher than normal but yet not high enough to be classified as Type 2 diabetes. Without any lifestyle changes, your blood glucose levels may continue to rise. By committing to eating a healthful diet, losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active, you can help restore your blood glucose to normal.

To diagnose prediabetes, one of three tests may be performed:

- **Fasting plasma glucose testing.** This test usually is conducted in the morning after you have fasted for at least eight hours. If your FPG is between 100 and 125 milligrams per deciliter, you may have prediabetes. If your test came back higher, you may have diabetes.
- **Oral glucose tolerance test.** This test is similar to the FPG, you must fast for at least eight hours before this test. On the day of your test, your blood glucose levels are checked twice: before and two hours after you drink a special drink. If your blood glucose level is between 140 and 199 mg/dL after drinking the sugary drink mixture, you have prediabetes.
- **A1C:** This test measures your average blood glucose for the past two to three months. If your blood glucose level is 5.7 to 6.4 percent, you may have prediabetes.

The most effective way to prevent prediabetes is to make lifestyle changes that increase healthful eating behaviors and physical activity. The American Diabetes Association recommends the following changes:

- **Eat well.** Create a meals plan that includes fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, poultry and dairy products and limit processed foods.

- **Exercise.** Exercise at least 30 minutes per day, five days per week. You can begin slowly and work your way up to 30 minutes if needed.
- **Lose weight or maintain weight.** Losing 5 to 7 percent of your weight can reduce your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes significantly. Make lifestyle changes to lose weight gradually to lower your risk. If you already are at a healthy weight, maintain it.

Additional Resources: American Diabetes Association: www.diabetes.org;
National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse: www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov ;
Diabetic Lifestyle: www.diabeticlifestyle.com ; Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service: www.fcs.tamu.edu .