



Heart-Healthy Tips: You Have the Power to Prevent Diabetes

Nearly 26 million Americans have diabetes, and it is estimated that nearly one-third of the people with diabetes do not know that they have the disease. An estimated 79 million adults are estimated to have pre-diabetes, placing them at increased risk for developing the disease. If left undiagnosed or untreated, diabetes can lead to serious health problems such as heart disease, blindness, kidney disease, stroke, amputation, and even death. With early diagnosis and treatment, people with diabetes can delay or prevent the development of these health problems.

The good news is that you can take steps now to reduce your risk of developing diabetes. Evaluate your risk and make changes now to prevent diabetes in the future. Here are seven steps from the New York State Department of Health Diabetes Prevention and Control Program that you can take to get started today.

- ▶ **Move more.** Get up, get out, and get moving. Try walking, dancing, bike riding, swimming, or playing ball with your friends or family. It doesn't matter what you do as long as you enjoy it. Try different things so you don't get bored.
- ▶ **Eat the healthy plate way.** Focus on eating less and making healthy food choices. Try to eat more fruits and vegetables (5 to 9 servings a day), dried beans, and whole grains. Cut down on fatty and fried foods. You still can eat the foods you enjoy, just eat less. On a healthy plate:
 - ▶ Vegetables and fruit make up half the plate.
 - ▶ Protein foods (fish, chicken, meat, beans, nuts) make up one quarter of the plate.
 - ▶ Carbohydrate foods (whole grain bread, pastas, cereals, brown rice, tortillas, and potatoes) make up the remaining quarter of the plate.
- ▶ **Take off some weight.** Once you start eating less and moving more, you will lose weight. By losing even 10 pounds, you can cut your chances of getting diabetes.
- ▶ **Set goals you can meet.** Start by making small changes. Try being active for 15 minutes a day this week. Then each week add 5 minutes until you build up to 30 minutes 5 days a week. Try to cut 100 calories out of your diet each day (that's one can of soda!). Slowly reduce your calories over time. Talk to your healthcare team about your goals.
- ▶ **Record your progress.** Write down all the things you eat and drink and the number of minutes you are active. Keeping a diary is one of the best ways to lose weight and keep it off.
- ▶ **Get help.** You don't have to prevent diabetes alone. Ask your family and friends to help you out. Involve them in your activities. You can help each other move more, eat less, and live a healthier life. There are also groups in your area that can help, as well as your healthcare team.
- ▶ **Keep at it.** Making even small changes is hard in the beginning. Try adding one new change a week. If you get off track, start again and keep at it.

Sources: NVFC Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program; National Diabetes Education Program; New York State Department of Health

Find more health and wellness tips and resources for first responders at www.healthy-firefighter.org.