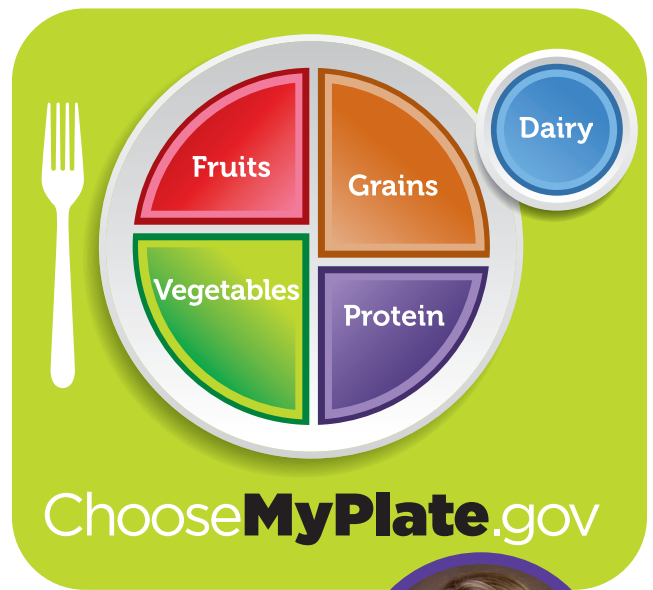


Pre-Diabetes Diagnosis? It's Time for Action!



A Q&A with Board Certified Family Medicine Physician
McKenzie Hanson, MD



Q: My doctor tells me I am pre-diabetic. What does that mean?

A: It means that your blood sugar level is higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be classified as type 2 diabetes. It is a warning sign. Without intervention, pre-diabetes is likely to become type 2 diabetes in 10 years or less if you don't make some lifestyle changes. It is an opportunity for you to improve your health.

Q: How can I tell if I am pre-diabetic?

A: Often, there are no signs or symptoms. It is most often diagnosed based on blood tests. If you have a history of high blood pressure, high cholesterol or have a strong family history then you should definitely be screened. Typically, you would have this screening done at your annual wellness exam. Be sure to share family history with your physician.

Q: What causes pre-diabetes?

A: The exact cause of pre-diabetes is unknown. Your body either doesn't make enough insulin or it doesn't use it well (that's called insulin resistance),

leading to a higher-than-normal blood sugar (glucose) level. So instead of sugar fueling your body, it builds up in your blood stream. Most of the sugar in your body comes from the foods you eat, specifically foods that contain carbohydrates. Any food that contains carbohydrates can affect your blood sugar levels, not just sweet foods. The highest levels of carbohydrates come from foods such as cereal, potatoes, white bread, or anything made with white flour. However, your body's liver is also a source of sugar. It makes sugar in times of stress (such as during intense exercise or with fasting) and when you are sleeping.

Q: How do I get my blood sugars to return to normal?

A: This is the challenging part, since in order to prevent or delay diabetes, you need to change your eating habits and activity level. The good news is that just a 5 to 10 percent weight loss can make a huge difference. That translates into 10 to 20 pounds for someone who weighs 200 pounds.

Exercise alone causes your body to use more glucose, so exercising can lower

your blood sugar level. Also when you exercise, your body doesn't need as much insulin to transport the sugar. Since your body isn't using insulin well when you have pre-diabetes, a lower insulin resistance is a very good thing.

For diet, focus on fruits, vegetables and whole grains and healthy sources of protein such as lean cuts of meat that are grilled or baked, nuts such as cashews and almonds, and beans.

You may also benefit from a medication called metformin if you are considered by your doctor to be very high risk for developing type 2 diabetes. It works by keeping the liver from making more glucose when you don't need it, thereby keeping your blood glucose level in a better range.

Q: So my doctor tells me I need to lose weight and exercise more. What are resources to help me?

A: Studies show that just the act of recording what you are eating and what kind of activities you are doing can lead to weight loss. You can use a simple journal or do an online search for health

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and fitness apps. There are many that are free, such as MyFitnessPal.

Diets that are well studied and have proven long-term outcomes would be Weight Watchers and the Mediterranean diet. The Mediterranean diet emphasizes eating primarily plant-based foods, such

as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts. The government has moved away from the food pyramid and instead is recommending portion sizes and combinations of food based on the concept of a plate. Their website

(choosemyplate.gov) also has tips and online resources.

As a doctor, I do my best in educating and empowering patients, but when it comes to your health it is up to you. Much of this information is not new to us, but it is not easy to change. Find what motivates you – and act on it today!

For more information or to schedule an appointment please call 605-665-8910.