

Prevent and manage type 2 diabetes



In 2019, 520,000 British Columbians had diabetes. It's estimated that more than 704,000 BC residents will have diabetes 10 years from now — a 35% increase.¹

YOU ARE NOT alone if you, or someone you know, has been diagnosed with diabetes or prediabetes. Diabetes impacts a person's ability to produce (type 1) or properly use (type 2) insulin — a hormone created by the pancreas to manage the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood. Type 1 diabetes often develops in a person's younger years. Type 2, the most common form of diabetes, most often occurs in adulthood. It can generally be managed through diet and lifestyle changes, but may also require medication or insulin.

It's important to know if you have potential risk factors for developing diabetes, including family history. If you have a mother, father, brother or sister with diabetes, your chances

of getting the disease is higher. On the flip-side, if you have diabetes, your brother, sister or children may also be at risk.

The good news? If you are diagnosed with, or are at-risk of developing type 2 diabetes, there are steps you can take to improve your health and wellbeing. For example, by eating a healthy diet, exercising, and achieving a healthy weight, you may be able to reduce or even come off of your type 2 diabetes medication (changes should only be made in consultation with your health care provider).

More than 50% of type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed by incorporating healthy eating and increased physical activity into our daily lives.

¹diabetes.ca/DiabetesCanadaWebsite/media/About-Diabetes/Diabetes%20Charter/2019-Backgrounder-British-Columbia.pdf

Tips for preventing and managing type 2 diabetes

1. **Reduce sugar intake.** Did you know that a single serving of pop contains about 10 teaspoons (40 grams) of sugar?² That's the equivalent of four Purdy's Hedgehogs.³ Limit your sugar intake on items such as pop, desserts, and candy.
2. **Exercise.** If you have diabetes, it's especially important to incorporate exercises such as walking and resistance training (using bands or weights) into your exercise routine. As a first step, try walking 5 to 10 minutes per day, and gradually increase the number of minutes each week. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how this will lower your blood sugars and help you feel better!
3. **Watch for the signs.** If you might be at risk of diabetes, watch for early signs. This can include unusual thirst, frequent infections, and blurred vision after a meal. If your mother, father, brother or sister has diabetes, it's recommended that you get tested.
4. **Limit alcohol use.** If you live with diabetes you can still enjoy alcohol, but there are some things to keep in mind:^{4,5}
 - Some alcohol, like wine coolers, beer, and mixed drinks, may contain added sugar that can increase blood sugars and cause weight gain. If you choose to drink, then do so in moderation. For men, that means fewer than 15 "standard" drinks per week and for women, fewer than 10.
 - Alcohol can also lower blood sugars. It helps to have alcohol with a meal or snack that includes a carbohydrate, and to alternate between water and alcohol to reduce your risk of becoming dehydrated.

If you need medication to help manage your type 2 diabetes, don't forget to discuss metformin with your health care provider before considering other options.

Blood glucose test strips

Test strips are one method of monitoring blood sugar levels, and can help with your diabetes care when used appropriately. Most people with type 2 diabetes that can manage their condition without insulin don't need to test their blood sugar levels as often as they think.⁶ It's important to test with purpose (such as when you significantly adjust your diet, exercise or medication) and keep in mind that less frequent testing will not affect your diabetes control.

Frequency of testing blood glucose levels

Check with your health care provider or the websites below to learn more about testing frequency and diabetes management tools:

- **Diabetes Canada: Self-Monitoring of Blood Glucose Interactive Tool.** An [online tool](#) with information on determining the best testing pattern for you.
- **Diabetes Canada: Tools and Resources.** A large collection of [tools, resources, and information](#) to help patients live well with diabetes.
- **BC PharmaCare Blood Glucose Testing for Type 2 Diabetes Information.** [Information](#) on checking your blood sugar levels and managing type 2 diabetes.

Metformin

Metformin continues to be the best medication option for type 2 diabetes. It's been in use for decades, we know it's long-term benefits and side effects, and it's recommended as the first course of treatment.

Metformin reduces high sugar levels. It's also associated with weight loss, a prolonged lifespan, possible heart benefits, and may reduce the risk of cancer in older people with diabetes.⁷

Some side effects include nausea and diarrhea, but they generally go away within one to two weeks as the body adjusts to the medicine. Starting at a very low dose and gradually increasing it will also help.

What is a "standard" drink?

Different alcohol concentrations in beer, wine, and spirits, means the size of a "standard" drink depends on what you are drinking.



Beer (5% alcohol)

341ml or 12 fluid ounces or 1.5 cups



Wine (12% alcohol)

142ml or 5 fluid ounces or 0.6 cups



Spirits (40% alcohol)

43ml or 1.5 fluid ounces or 0.2 cups

²[diabetes.ca/advocacy---policies/our-policy-positions/sugar---diabetes](#)

³[purdys.com/Hedgehogs-pack-of-1-24-g](#)

⁴[diabetes.ca/managing-my-diabetes/stories/diabetes-and-drinking](#)

⁵[diabetes.ca/DiabetesCanadaWebsite/media/About-Diabetes/Diabetes%20Charter/2019-Backgrounder-British-Columbia.pdf](#)

⁶[choosingwiselycanada.org/self-monitoring-blood-sugar](#)

⁷[guidelines.diabetes.ca/docs/cpg/Ch13-Pharmacologic-Glycemic-Management-of-Type-2-Diabetes-in-Adults.pdf](#)