**5 Ways to Beat Type 2 Diabetes**

Everyday Health. Jan Sheehan. Medically reviewed by Lindsey Marcellin, MD, MPH

**Managing Type 2 Diabetes: Improve Your Diet**

Keeping close tabs on your diet is a major way to [manage type 2 diabetes](http://www.everydayhealth.com/type-2-diabetes/management/). A [healthy diet](http://www.everydayhealth.com/type-2-diabetes/healthy-meals-for-type-2-diabetes.aspx) for people with type 2 diabetes includes fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, lean meats, and low-fat dairy. Focus on eating fruits and non-starchy vegetables, like broccoli, carrots, and lettuce, and having smaller portions of starchy foods, meat, and dairy products. Be especially careful about loading up on foods that are high on the glycemic index (GI), a system that ranks foods according to how they affect glucose levels. High-GI foods include white breads, white rice, and soda.

Limit [fast food](http://www.everydayhealth.com/type-2-diabetes/type-2-diabetes-and-fast-food.aspx), too. In a 15-year study of 3,000 young adults, those who ate fast food more than twice a week developed [insulin resistance](http://www.everydayhealth.com/diabetes/type2/diagnosing/specialist/getaneh/diabetes-vs-insulin-resistance.aspx) (a diabetes risk factor) at twice the rate of people who weren’t fast food junkies. Plus, fast food is loaded with refined carbohydrates, trans fats, and sodium, which can be especially unhealthy for people with type 2 diabetes.

**Managing Type 2 Diabetes: Lose Weight**

Shedding pounds can improve blood sugar levels and help keep type 2 diabetes under control. And you don’t have to lose a lot of weight to make a difference. “If you already have type 2 diabetes, losing just 10 to 15 pounds can lower your glucose levels,” says McLaughlin.

Where your fat is distributed also affects your diabetes risk and management. People who carry most of their fat in their [belly](http://www.everydayhealth.com/diabetes/type2/preventing/diabetes-belly-fat-connection.aspx) (apple shape) are more prone to type 2 diabetes than those with fat mostly in the thighs, hips, and buttocks (pear shape). A woman whose waist measures more than 35 inches and a man with a 40-inch waist need to lose weight for good diabetes management, says McLaughlin, adding that a healthy diet and regular aerobic exercise will whittle away weight in the stomach area.

**Managing Type 2 Diabetes: Exercise Regularly**

Even without losing a pound, [exercise](http://www.everydayhealth.com/diabetes/type2/managing/exercising-for-your-health.aspx) can help keep type 2 diabetes under control.

“When you do physical activity, such as walking, your muscle contractions push glucose out of your blood into your cells,” explains McLaughlin. The result: Better blood sugar levels.

Of course, the more intense the exercise, the better. In one study of vigorous exercise and type 2 diabetes, women who walked quickly gained more protection from type 2 diabetes than those who walked at a more leisurely pace.

Regular weight-lifting sessions can also help keep blood sugar levels steady. McLaughlin recommends using hand weights or resistance bands for 30 minutes two to three times a week.

**Managing Type 2 Diabetes: Control Sleep Apnea**

Many overweight people with type 2 diabetes also have [sleep apnea](http://www.everydayhealth.com/sleep-apnea/guide/), a condition in which a person stops breathing temporarily while sleeping.

People with type 2 diabetes and sleep apnea are at higher risk of death from heart attack and [stroke](http://www.everydayhealth.com/stroke/). Their blood sugar levels also fluctuate more dramatically while sleeping than in those who have type 2 diabetes, but not sleep apnea, according to one study. These fluctuations have been linked to a higher risk for diabetic complications.

Severe cases of sleep apnea may need to be treated with surgery or by wearing a special device while sleeping, but less severe cases can be managed by losing weight. Talk to your doctor if you suspect you may have sleep apnea — loud snoring is one sign. A special sleep test can diagnose sleep apnea.

**Managing Type 2 Diabetes: Soothe Stress**

Stress can make blood sugar levels harder to control, says McLaughlin. Try relaxation techniques to chase away stress. Top-notch stress busters include yoga, tai chi, meditation, massage, and soothing music.

As a bonus, stress relief may help you sleep better, important because studies show that not getting enough sleep can worsen type 2 diabetes. Sleeping less than six hours a night has also been found to contribute to impaired glucose tolerance, a condition that often precedes type 2 diabetes.

Besides yoga, try deep breathing before bed. Other tips to try:

* Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and spicy foods at night.
* Maintain a slightly cool temperature in your sleep environment.
* Block out all light and noise.
* Go to bed at the same time every night to establish a sleep schedule.

These management strategies can have a dramatic impact on blood sugar levels and the progression of type 2 diabetes, says McLaughlin. Simple lifestyle changes will improve how you feel today, and help ensure a healthier future.

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