

- Diabetes

# SO YOU'RE PREDIABETIC, WELCOME TO THE CLUB

It's never too late to change your habits

I'm a 45-year-old office worker who is overweight but otherwise healthy. My concern is my Fasting Blood Sugar (FBS), which as per our annual medical exam conducted last week is 112 mg/dl. I know that the normal FBS is below 100? Am I diabetic already? What do I need to do?  
—alfred\_yosi@gmail.com



MEDICAL NOTES

EDUARDO GONZALES, MD

No, you're not diabetic, you're prediabetic. Welcome to the club that includes—as per US figures which are probably true globally—more than one out of three adults above 18 years old!

Prediabetes is really just a wakeup call. You're not diabetic yet, but you could be, soon, unless you change some of your habits. Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for 90 to 95 percent of all cases of diabetes mellitus, is almost always preceded by prediabetes and about one-fourth of people with prediabetes become diabetic within three to five years. Another ominous statistic: A 45-year-old with prediabetes (that's you) has a 74 percent lifetime risk of progressing to type 2 diabetes.

#### Who has prediabetes?

The normal FBS level is less than 100 mg/dL. Someone whose FBS is 126 mg/dL or higher on two separate tests, has diabetes while someone like you whose FBS level is from 100 to 125 mg/dL, has prediabetes.

Prediabetics have no symptoms. That is why most do not know they have the condition. Prediabetics are diagnosed when they undergo blood testing for FBS (as you did) or either of two other equally reliable tests

for blood sugar levels: Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT) and Hemoglobin A1C (average blood sugar) test.

Incidentally, everyone should have their FBS determined starting at age 45, earlier if any of the following risk factors for diabetes are present: being overweight (with a body mass index of 25 or higher); a sedentary lifestyle; a family history of type 2 diabetes; a history of high blood pressure or high cholesterol. If the initial FBS result is

*Lifestyle changes can enable as much as 60 percent of prediabetics to prevent the progression of their condition to diabetes or even return their blood sugar levels to the normal range. The key lifestyle changes involve weight control, exercise, and diet.*

normal, then the test needs to be repeated only after three years. But people who are prediabetic should be tested every year.

#### Prediabetes does not inevitably progress to diabetes

Lifestyle changes can enable as much as 60 percent of prediabetics to prevent the progression of their condition to diabetes or even return their blood sugar levels to the normal range. The key lifestyle changes involve weight control, exercise, and diet.

Since you're overweight as you mentioned in your email, the chance of your prediabetes evolving into diabetes is high. You need to reduce, ideally to your desirable body weight, but losing as little as seven percent of your body weight will already make a difference. It can already prevent your prediabetes from progressing to diabetes, according to a landmark prediabetes study of more than 3,000 adults published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2002.

Get moderate, not vigorous, exercise. A study at the Duke University Medical Center showed that energetic walking improved oral glucose tolerance better than vigorous jogging in people with prediabetes. Evidently, high-intensity exercise primarily burns glucose, while moderate but prolonged exercise burns fat, which is better for long-term blood sugar control. Your moderate exercise need not be in the form of a structured program. It could be in the form of simple changes in your habits such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator; doing household chores regularly, walking or biking in going to and from the neighborhood grocery store instead of driving, etc. The important thing is that your activities lead to palpable physical exertion and add up to more than 30 minutes a day.

In so far as diet is concerned, eating red meat and processed meat, and drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, is associated with a higher risk of diabetes while a diet high in fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, and olive oil is associated with a lower risk. So, shift to a balanced diet that is high in fibers and healthy fats, and low in simple sugars and meat.

Note: email inquiries on health matters to: [medical\\_notes2@yahoo.com](mailto:medical_notes2@yahoo.com)

