

# How to DODGE DIABETES

BY MICHELLE GIBEAULT TRAUB



**T**he nation's diabetes statistics are grim, with 29.1 million Americans living with the disease. And others' risk of developing diabetes increases with age, making the consequences of poor blood sugar control all too real for many. There is good news, however. Diabetes is not a product of aging alone. It can be prevented by adapting to life's changes and making healthy choices along the way.

**Manage your weight** Texas-based endocrinologist Kelly Wirfel says the most important aspect of diabetes prevention is "maintenance of near-normal weight with a healthy diet and regular exercise." Because we lose muscle as we age, our metabolism slows and we develop a greater tendency to store fat. In addition, major life changes often mean we participate in less daily activity. As such, we require fewer calories. If we don't adjust by eating less or burning more calories, we are destined to gain weight.

**Cut calories** There are several solutions for decreasing calorie intake: cutting portion sizes, forgoing calorie-rich desserts and snacks, and substituting water or tea for beverages such as soda or juice. Alternatively, you can fill up on lower-calorie foods like broth-based soups and fiber-rich vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Avoiding high-fat foods like butter, cream, cheese and fatty meats while limiting foods with added sugar will naturally lower the calories you consume.

**Stay active** If counting calories feels overwhelming, increasing your activity level

through regular exercise may be enough to prevent weight gain. The Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), a federally funded research study, concluded that a moderate diet – teamed with 30 minutes of exercise performed five times per week – led to a 5 to 7 percent weight loss. That was enough to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes in study participants. Exercise is especially important in diabetes prevention because it helps the body lower blood sugar efficiently. All forms of movement help, including walking, biking, gardening, swimming and taking an exercise class.

**Eat unprocessed foods** Several nutrients appear to be especially beneficial for diabetes prevention and blood-sugar regulation. An analysis of data from multiple research studies revealed that individuals who consumed the highest amounts of magnesium had a 23 percent lower risk of developing diabetes. When foods are processed for packaging, like with white flour and boxed mixes, magnesium is depleted. So to get ample magnesium it is important to eat fresh, unprocessed foods like green leafy vegetables, nuts, beans and whole grains. Like magnesium, the mineral chromium plays a role in maintaining healthy blood sugar levels. Chromium can be found in a variety of unprocessed foods, including broccoli, potatoes, meats and whole grains.

**Aim for more D** Vitamin D is a hormone produced naturally by the skin in response to the sun, as well as a nutrient consumed primarily through fortified dairy products. Vitamin D has

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# FAT CHANCE

"Trans fats" weren't on food labels until 2006, when the FDA mandated that consumers be told about their amount in the foods they were buying.

Trans fatty acids (or trans fats) are fats that have been altered in processing by adding hydrogen. The result is a fat that remains solid at higher temperatures and is used by manufacturers to improve the texture, shelf life and flavor stability of foods such as cookies, frozen pizza and pie crusts.

The problem is that trans fats raise the level of LDL (low-density lipoprotein), which collects along arterial walls and leads to a greatly increased risk of coronary artery disease and heart attacks. They also lower the level of HDL (high-density lipoprotein), which actually works to lower the level of LDL.

Recently, the FDA moved to institute a permanent ban on trans fats by determining that partially hydrogenated oils (the main source of trans fats) are no longer recognized as GRAS ("generally recognized as safe," an FDA designation for all substances added to food for human consumption).

According to the CDC, this determination – not yet permanent, giving the food industry time to reformulate products so as not to cause a market disruption – could prevent 10,000 to 20,000 heart attacks and up to 7,000 coronary heart disease deaths every year.

But consumers should read labels and understand that a good diet isn't based on the presence or absence of a single ingredient, according to Sean O'Keefe, a Virginia Tech food sciences professor.

"That's not the way diet and nutrition work," he says. "The reason that products with things like trans fats exist is because our standard excuse today is 'I don't have time.' So we trade off between convenience and what goes into a healthy diet."

Look instead for the so-called good fats: polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, found in oils such as olive and sunflower, and other heart-healthy oils like those in nuts, seeds and fish.

– Lance Frazer

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## DIABETES

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been associated with a decreased risk of both type 1 and type 2 diabetes. In a review of data from the Nurses' Health Study, daily intakes of more than 800 IU (international units) vitamin D and more than 1,200 mg calcium were associated with a 33 percent lower risk of type 2 diabetes. As we age, the body's ability to make vitamin D from UV rays decreases, so it is important to get additional vitamin D from your diet or ask your doctor about supplements.

**Get tested** The CDC reports that 27.8 percent of Americans with diabetes are undiagnosed, and recommends anyone 45 or older be tested. If you have additional risk factors such as obesity, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol or a family history of diabetes, it is especially important that you consult with a health-care provider. Through a simple blood or urine test, your provider will be able to evaluate your blood sugar levels.

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## Cold-weather workouts



As winter approaches, HealthDay has some tips for outdoor exercise:

- Check the air temperature and wind chill before heading out.
- Dress in layers to adjust the amount of insulation you need during your workout.
- Cover your head.
- Wear gloves to keep blood flowing to your hands and prevent cold-related tissue damage.

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## Best anti-inflammatories

According to *Pharmacy Times* and *U.S. News & World Report*, the following products are pharmacists' top picks for anti-inflammatories:

PRODUCT	PERCENT OF PHARMACISTS WHO RECOMMEND
Advil	37
Aleve	31
Motrin	26