

What is prediabetes?

Prediabetes occurs when glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes.

Like diabetes, prediabetes is a condition where the amount of glucose in the blood is too high, because the body cannot use it properly. This is because the pancreas in your body does not produce enough insulin, or the insulin that is produced doesn't work properly (known as insulin resistance). Insulin helps glucose enter the body's cells, where it is used for energy.

As the name suggests, people with prediabetes have an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Having prediabetes has also been shown to put a person at risk of having heart disease.

The important thing to remember is that if you have been diagnosed with prediabetes, steps can be taken to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes and/or heart disease. With the right changes, your blood glucose can even return to normal levels.

Prediabetes is also called:

- Borderline diabetes
- Impaired glucose tolerance (IGT)
- Impaired fasting glucose (IFG)
- Impaired glucose regulation (IGR)
- Non-diabetic hyperglycaemia (NDH).

All these terms are used to describe the same condition.

What factors increase the risk of prediabetes and type 2 Diabetes?

As people with prediabetes don't have any signs or symptoms, it is important to be aware of the risk factors and have your blood glucose levels tested by your doctor if you are at risk. Your healthcare team can help you assess your risk.

Monitoring prediabetes

If you have been diagnosed with prediabetes, no one can be sure whether or not you will go on to develop type 2 diabetes – that is why it is important that you see your GP so that you can be monitored.

Once you have been diagnosed with prediabetes, you should be assessed by your GP every 12 months, unless you develop symptoms of diabetes earlier.

How is prediabetes managed?

The aim of managing prediabetes is to delay or prevent type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Making lifestyle changes is key to managing or reversing prediabetes. This includes the following steps:

Managing your weight

Reducing your weight if you are overweight will help your body use insulin better.

Eating well

Eat a healthy, balanced diet that is low in fat, salt and sugar and accompanied by plenty of fruit and vegetables. This will help you control your weight and blood glucose levels.

Keeping active

Regular physical activity will manage your weight and help your body use insulin better.

References

<http://www.diabetes.org.uk/> available on 26/7/2010