

Are You at Risk for Diabetes?

You have an estimated one in 600,000 chance of being struck by lightning, a one in eight chance of developing breast cancer if you are a woman, and, for people born in the year 2000, a one in three chance of being diagnosed with diabetes. Does that mean any of these three things will definitely happen to you? No. These risk estimates are referring to the probability that something may occur, not guaranteeing that it will.

Risk estimates for diseases such as diabetes are developed by studying large groups of people and evaluating categories and characteristics that may be associated with increased or decreased risk. While there are seven significant risk factors for developing diabetes, it is important to keep in mind that even if you have similar risk factors as another person, you can have very different disease experiences.

1. **Obesity**

Being overweight or obese (having a body mass index higher than 25) increases your risk for diabetes. This is the primary risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

2. **Family History**

If you have a parent or sibling who has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, you run a higher risk of developing the condition.

3. **Inactive Lifestyle**

Because muscles cells have more insulin receptors than fat cells, regular exercise can decrease insulin resistance. Regular exercise also can help control weight and lower blood sugar levels by increasing insulin effectiveness.

4. **Increasing Age**

Scientists believe that as the pancreas ages, it doesn't pump insulin as efficiently. People over the age of 45 should be tested for type 2 diabetes every three years if results are normal and if they have no other risk factors for the disease. If results are border line or there are other risk factors, the test should be repeated more frequently.

5. **Genetics**

African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives, American Indians and Asians are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes. However, a genetic disposition doesn't guarantee someone will get diabetes. Lifestyle choices are an important part in determining who gets diabetes.

6. **High Blood Cholesterol and High Blood Pressure**

The risk of developing diabetes increases if your HDL (good) cholesterol level is under 35 mg/dL or your triglyceride level is over 250 mg/dL. High blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher also increases diabetes risk. These two risk factors are often linked to

obesity, a high fat diet, and lack of exercise, all of which can also lead to type 2 diabetes.

7. Gestational Diabetes

Women who developed gestational diabetes when pregnant or gave birth to a baby that weighed more than nine pounds run a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life. Women who have gestational diabetes and their babies can develop type 2 diabetes years later.

You can have all seven risk factors for diabetes and never develop the condition. Or you could have just one and be diagnosed with the disease. Researchers are not sure exactly why some people develop diabetes, while others do not. And even though there is no cure for the disease, you can do a lot to lower your risk by exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet, losing weight, and lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Talk with your doctor if you are concerned about your risk of developing diabetes or if you notice any symptoms of type 2 diabetes such as increased thirst, frequent urination, fatigue, weight loss, blurred vision, or slow-healing sores.

For more information about diabetes, talk with your doctor or visit the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse Web site at www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov.