



# What Are Type 2 Diabetes Risk Factors and Why Are They Important?

Type 2 diabetes is a *progressive* disease. That means it happens slowly over a long period of time. In fact, many people who have type 2 diabetes don't know it. They are *undiagnosed*, meaning their type 2 diabetes has not been identified (*diagnosed*) and, as a result, not treated. This puts them at risk for getting *complications* from their type 2 diabetes like amputations and kidney disease.

This handout reviews *risk factors* that increase a person's chance of getting type 2 diabetes.

## Age

Risk for type 2 diabetes increases with age. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends that people be tested for type 2 diabetes starting at age 45, especially if they are overweight or obese.



## Obesity

Having a high amount of excess body fat also ups type 2 diabetes risk. Your healthcare provider will calculate your *body mass index*, or BMI, which is a measure of body fat based on your height and weight. The ADA says that all people with a BMI higher than 25 (or higher than 23 if you're Asian American) plus 1 or more other risk factors should be tested for type 2 diabetes—no matter what their age is.

## These are some other type 2 diabetes risk factors

- Not getting enough physical activity (exercise)
- Having a first-degree relative with type 2 diabetes. First-degree relatives are your parents, your brothers and sisters, and your children.
- Having high blood pressure or high cholesterol
- Being a member of these races or ethnicities—African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander
- Having a history of heart disease (*car-di-o-vas-cu-lar disease*)
- Having an A1C higher than 5.7%. A1C is an average of your blood glucose over 3 months. An A1C is one of the tests that can be used to diagnose type 2 diabetes.

## Did you know?

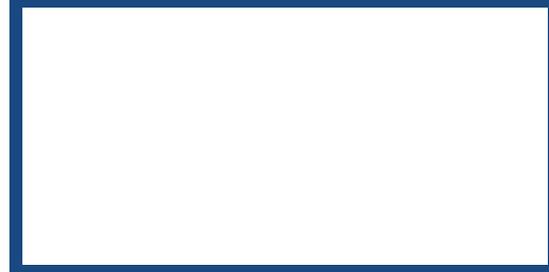


**1** in **4** people have type 2 diabetes but don't know it



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
TALK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER



## Talk with your healthcare provider about your risk

Early diagnosis is important for any disease or condition, and this is really true for type 2 diabetes. Talking with your healthcare provider about your risk means you can take action early to prevent type 2 diabetes if you don't have it—or treat it early if you do.

REFERENCE: American Diabetes Association. Standards of medical care in diabetes—2015. *Diabetes Care*. 2015;38(suppl 1):S1-S93.

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