

A woman in a 1940s-style outfit, including a red and white patterned headscarf, a light-colored cardigan over a white collared shirt, and a long, pleated white skirt, is dancing joyfully with her arms raised in a grand ballroom. Other people in period clothing are visible in the background, dancing and socializing. The room has large windows and ornate wooden architecture.

DIABETES PREVENTION

PREVENTING TYPE 2 DIABETES.

BECAUSE HEALTH
IS EVERYTHING

SWICA

Diabetes Prevention:

Preventing type 2 diabetes.

Is it possible to prevent type 2 diabetes?

Yes indeed! Studies show that individuals at risk of contracting type 2 diabetes can usefully take the following precautions:

- Lose weight (if they are overweight)
- Take exercise
- Improve their diet
- If a healthier diet does not have the desired effect, specific medications (principally metformin) may help, but they may have side effects.

There are indications that giving up smoking may prevent type 2 diabetes, but the evidence remains inconclusive. However, there are many other good reasons for giving up smoking. These include a reduced risk of heart attack, stroke and many other complaints.

Which factors increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes?

There are many factors which increase the risk of type 2 diabetes:

- Being overweight or obese, especially if the fat is around the waist (and not just on the hips, thighs and buttocks).
- Not taking enough exercise
- Smoking
- A history of diabetes in the family
- Diabetes during pregnancy (“gestational diabetes”)

In addition, dark-skinned people and people with Asian or Latin American roots have a higher risk of diabetes than white-skinned people.

Besides the questionnaire test, are there any medical tests for finding out if you are at high risk?

Yes, there are three tests which doctors use to identify individuals who have prediabetes or are likely to develop type 2 diabetes. These tests measure blood sugar (or “blood glucose”) in three different ways.

Although they can help to identify a risk of contracting diabetes, they are not suitable for everyone. Your doctor or therapist will decide whether one of these tests is right for you. Affected individuals are often overweight and exhibit other diabetes risk factors. These could include previous gestational diabetes or a genetic predisposition.

If the blood test shows that your blood sugar level is above average but not as high as it would be for an actual diabetic, this condition is referred to as “prediabetes”. Individuals with prediabetes are at increased risk of becoming diabetics.

Fasting blood glucose test

This test measures the blood sugar level after the patient has eaten and drunk nothing (except water) for eight hours.

Glucose tolerance test

The patient is not allowed to eat or drink anything in the 8–12 hours prior to this test. At the time of the test the patient drinks a liquid containing a predefined amount of sugar. A blood sample is taken two hours later and the blood sugar level is measured.

Haemoglobin A1c test (also referred to as the “HbA1c test”)

In this case it doesn’t matter whether the patient has eaten anything before the test because it measures the average blood sugar level for the previous two to three months.

What should I do if I have prediabetes?

If you have prediabetes, you should change your lifestyle in order to prevent diabetes developing. Here's what you should do:

- Lose weight, if you are over normal weight (BMI or waist-to-hip ratio). You can reduce your risk significantly by losing 5%–10% of your body weight. In other words, if you weigh 100 kilograms, you should plan to lose 5–10 kilos.
- Eat the right foods. Try to eat plenty of fruit, vegetables and low-fat dairy products. Eat very little meat, sweet things and refined (finely ground) cereals. Do not drink lemonade, fruit juice or other sweet drinks.
- Exercise. Exercise every day for at least 30 minutes. You should aim to raise your heart rate and begin to sweat. You don't have to join a fitness centre or do extreme workouts. Even simple activities like walking, gardening and dancing will be beneficial.
- Quit smoking. If you are a smoker, ask your doctor or therapist for help with quitting. The proportion of people who succeed in giving up is much higher among those who consult their doctor and use medication.
- Take your medication. If your doctor or therapist has prescribed medication for you, take it regularly as prescribed. This is particularly important for medicines which reduce blood pressure and cholesterol. Those suffering from prediabetes and diabetes have an above-average risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke, which means that these medicines are important.

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SWICA will help you take control of your health and remain fit and healthy for longer.

You can run, swim or even dance your diabetes risk away.

It is not easy to change ingrained habits. That's why SWICA helps you to succeed in a variety of ways. Together with a number of partner organisations, SWICA offers nutrition and exercise programmes which are specially designed for individuals with an increased diabetes risk. People attending these programmes are trained and motivated over extended periods in order to help them reach their goals. Whether you prefer to do this alone or in a group can be decided with the help of the programme itself. Under its supplementary insurance plans SWICA reimburses part of the programme costs in the form of a prevention contribution. In addition, the medical staff at santé24, SWICA's telemedicine service, can help you choose the right programme and provide long-term support to affected individuals to help them overcome any dips in their motivation.

SWICA Healthcare Organisation

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