

Make “Smart Moves” to reduce your risk of diabetes

Here’s a disturbing fact: 80% of adults with prediabetes don’t even know they have it. Are you one of them?

Prediabetes is a serious condition when your blood sugar level is higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. If left unchecked, prediabetes can become diabetes, a life-threatening condition that can lead to blindness, kidney failure, heart disease, stroke and loss of toes, feet or legs.

Unfortunately, 96 million (more than 1 in every 3) U.S. adults have prediabetes – including as many as 11,000 adults in the South Heartland District Health Department’s 4-county area of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties. If you have prediabetes and you don’t make changes, you are heading on the path toward diabetes. In fact, many people with prediabetes develop type 2 diabetes within five years. If you have prediabetes, it also means you are more likely to have a heart attack or stroke.

How do I know if I have prediabetes? Here are 2 ways to check. The first is a self-test that will tell you if you are at risk for prediabetes and the second is a blood test to check your blood sugar levels.

1. Self-Test Method: Take a short quiz (prediabetes risk test) to see if you have any of the risk factors. There is an online tool and a printable version of this risk test on the CDC Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/prediabetes/takethetest/#section6>. The quiz will ask you a few questions:
 - 1) What is your age?
 - 2) Are you a man or a woman?
 - 3) If you are a woman, have you ever been diagnosed with gestational diabetes?
 - 4) Do you have a mother, father, sister or brother with diabetes?
 - 5) Have you ever been diagnosed with high blood pressure?
 - 6) Are you physically active?
 - 7) What is your weight category?

Your answer to each question is assigned points. If your total point score is 5 or higher, this means you are at risk for prediabetes and you should talk to your doctor to see if additional testing is needed.

2. Blood Test Method: This method checks your average blood sugar levels over the past 3 months. It is called the A1C (pronounced “A-one-C”) test – also known as the hemoglobin A1C or HBA1ctest). This test is recommended for adults over age 45 and also for people who are under 45, are overweight and have one or more of the prediabetes risk factors. Newer recommendations are suggesting this screening test for adults beginning at age 35. You can get this test at most physician’s offices or at an area health fair.

A normal A1c level is below 5.7%, a level of 5.7% to 6.4% indicates prediabetes, and a level of 6.5% or more indicates diabetes. Within the 5.7% to 6.4% prediabetes range, the higher your A1c, the greater your risk is for developing type 2 diabetes.

Now here's some good news! Prediabetes can often be reversed. There are steps you can take to protect yourself, so that your risk of developing prediabetes is lessened or, if you already have prediabetes, so that the risk of developing diabetes is smaller. The three key steps (the three smart moves!) are to 1) be more active, 2) lose weight and 3) eat healthy.

Exercising regularly, ideally at least 150 minutes per week, will reduce your risk of developing diabetes. Even losing a modest amount of weight, 5-7% of your body weight, is a positive step in the right direction. Paying more attention to the types and amounts of foods you eat is another smart move, including balancing the amounts and types of protein, carbohydrates/starches, and fruits/veggies you eat every day.

Most people already know these things, but making these kinds of changes is a big challenge for most of us. So, here is some more good news: there is support to help you be successful at making these lifestyle changes.

South Heartland's 'Smart Moves' Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) is a proven (evidence-based) lifestyle change program recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for people who have prediabetes. Smart Moves is a year-long class with a trained lifestyle coach. There are two options: in-person group classes and online version.

Smart Moves participants are supported to eat healthier, to increase their physical activity, and to overcome obstacles that may get in the way of making lifestyle changes. The Smart Moves program emphasizes that even small changes can have a big impact on a person's health.

If you took the self-quiz and think you have prediabetes, how can you learn more about the Smart Moves program? How can you know if it is right for you? More good news! South Heartland staff are happy to talk with you about the Smart Moves program. We can answer your questions, help you determine whether the in-person or on-line version might be the best fit for you, let you know where and when the next classes begin, and help you register for a class when you are ready.

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month – a good time to start making some smart moves to reduce your risk of diabetes. To learn more about prediabetes or about South Heartland's Smart Moves Diabetes Prevention Program, you may contact the health department or visit our website at: www.southheartlandhealth.ne.gov.

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