

Type 2 Diabetes

Also known as “the sugar” or “a touch of sugar”

What to discuss with your care team to
help you receive high-quality care



Ontario Health is committed to improving the quality of health care in the province, in partnership with patients, health care professionals, and other organizations.

To do that, Ontario Health develops quality standards that set out important steps to treat conditions like type 2 diabetes. These standards are based on current evidence and input from an expert committee that includes patients, health care professionals, and researchers.

If you're interested in learning more about the quality standard on type 2 diabetes, see page 12 of this guide. It has a summary of the top nine areas to improve care for people with type 2 diabetes. You can also download the complete [quality standard here](#).



What is type 2 diabetes?

You might hear some people call type 2 diabetes “the sugar” or “a touch of sugar.” That’s because type 2 diabetes develops when your body can’t adjust sugar—or glucose—levels in your blood. Blood sugar is your main source of energy: it comes from the food you eat. A hormone (a chemical) called insulin helps you use this energy.



What is prediabetes?

Your doctor might have told you that you have prediabetes. This means you have a higher chance of getting type 2 diabetes. The good news is that you can slow things down or even prevent type 2 diabetes with some changes to your diet and lifestyle.



Ask your health care provider about:

- Healthy eating and exercise ideas
- When you should expect blood tests for type 2 diabetes
- How to prevent damage to your heart and blood vessels
- Medications that can help



Did you know?

- Roughly one in 10 people in Ontario has some type of diabetes
- Although there are three main types of diabetes, type 2 is the most common

Use this guide to talk with your health care team about your diagnosis and how you feel about your type 2 diabetes journey. It doesn't tell you everything you need to know about type 2 diabetes, but it can point you toward the right care. It includes information and questions about:



Finding out you have type 2 diabetes



Staying healthy with type 2 diabetes



Checking your blood sugar



Lowering your chance of complications



Including your family and community in your care

If you don't have time to go through the entire guide, use this checklist when you talk with your care team. The more you talk with them, the more help you'll get with managing your type 2 diabetes.



Learn more

[What is diabetes?](#) Here, Diabetes Canada shares more details about diabetes, treatments, and problems that can come with the condition.



Finding out you have type 2 diabetes

Everyone reacts to type 2 diabetes in different ways.

You might be relieved to find out why you don't feel well. Or if you didn't have symptoms, the diagnosis could be a surprise—it could take time to get used to it.

You might worry about how your life will change. If type 2 diabetes runs in your family, you might already know what some of those changes could be. Either way, you will probably have questions about your next steps.

“Now that you know what it is, you try to work with the medications, the exercise, the new menu. It gives you a bit of hope that things are going to work out.”

PERSON WITH TYPE 2
DIABETES



Ask your care team:

- How serious is type 2 diabetes? What does this mean for my overall health?
- What are some symptoms of type 2 diabetes?
- How will type 2 diabetes affect my other medical conditions?
- What services are available to help me with my type 2 diabetes?



Write it down

It can help to take notes as your symptoms develop and change. Having notes with these details will help you describe things clearly when you talk with your care team.

At visits with your care team, a friend or family member can take notes for you. That can make it easier for you to remember your discussions with your care team.



Staying healthy with type 2 diabetes

Staying healthy with type 2 diabetes has its ups and downs.

But with the right information and some changes—to your diet or medication—you'll be able to take care of yourself. You'll feel better and may be able to slow type 2 diabetes down at the same time. Your health care team can help you set goals and make a plan and can support you through any challenges.

Talk with your care team about ways to manage your type 2 diabetes (see below). You can check off the ones that are most important to you.



Food

- How eating affects type 2 diabetes
- Foods you can eat to stay healthy
- Low-cost food options
- Challenges with eating a healthy diet



Stress

- How stress affects your blood sugar levels
- Activities that can help you lower your stress
- What you can do if you have sadness, anxiety, or depression



Sleeping

- How sleep affects your diabetes
- What you can do to improve your sleep
- Challenges to sleeping well



Exercise

- What exercises you can do
- Free or low-cost activities
- Challenges with staying active



Medications

- If taking medications will help your type 2 diabetes
- What medications to take
- When and how to check your blood sugar
- Low-cost medication options
- Challenges with taking medication



Learn more

Find more helpful information on managing your diabetes from [Diabetes Canada](#), which shares:

- Tools and resources
- Recipes
- Information on preventing complications
- Information about kids and teens with type 2 diabetes
- Webinars
- Impact stories



Checking your blood sugar

Checking your blood sugar levels and keeping them within a healthy range can be challenging, even when you're trying your best.

What you eat, your activity level, and your medication doses all affect your blood sugar levels.

Things like stress and hormones can influence your levels, too. It can take time to figure out what works for you and how to balance your efforts.

You and your care team can work together to set your target blood sugar range and targets for another test called an A1C (see box). They will also help you create a routine that helps you stay in this range as much as possible.



The A1C test

The A1C result shows you and your care team how well your diabetes management plan has been working over the past 2 to 3 months.

Remember, your A1C number isn't a test to pass or fail—you're aiming for the healthiest range for you, to help reduce or prevent diabetes complications.



Ask your care team:

- What information will we use to see if I'm in my target range?
- I'm following my plan, but my blood sugars aren't in range. What can I do? What else might affect my blood sugars?
- Are there any tools or technologies that can help me stay in range? How do I use the information they provide?



Tell your care team:

- If you don't feel involved in setting your targets
- If there are things that make it hard to reach your targets



Lowering your chance of complications

The extra sugar, or glucose, in your blood can create other health problems.



When you're diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, your care team will check your overall health and review it regularly. They will do blood, eye, and blood pressure tests, and ask questions to watch for:

- Problems with your kidneys
- Problems with your heart and blood vessels
- Problems with your vision
- High blood pressure
- Problems with the fat levels in your blood

They might also look for other problems that are linked to type 2 diabetes. Let your care team know if you've noticed any of the following:

- Tingling sensations in your hands, arms, feet, or legs
- Wounds or sores on your feet
- Problems with sex
- Bleeding or red gums
- Sadness, anxiety, or depression

People with type 2 diabetes can also have problems with heart health or with their blood vessels. Along with the steps you're taking to stay healthy, your health care team may suggest you take:

- Medications to lower your blood pressure
- Medications to protect your blood vessels



Ask your care team:

- What warning signs should I look for?
- How often will you check for problems?
- Is there anything I can do to avoid complications?
- Are there any extra medications I should take to prevent complications?

“My grandmother is my role model, and I have seen how she lived well with diabetes.”

PERSON WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES



Learn more

[Diabetes Canada](#) shares more information on problems related to type 2 diabetes and tips on preventing diabetes-related complications.



Including your family or community in your care

It can help to include family and community members in your care, even if it's just to take notes during a health care visit. Make sure that your care team knows who you want in your care circle.



Ask your care team:

- How can I talk with my family about having type 2 diabetes?
- Can my family members come to my appointments?
- What other ways can they be part of my care?
- What tools can help them support my type 2 diabetes?

*“Whatever involves somebody involves the whole family.
Family means the whole community.”*

PERSON WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES



For your reference: The quality standard in brief

This patient guide accompanies the quality standard on type 2 diabetes.

Below is a summary of the top nine areas to improve care for type 2 diabetes. To read more, you can download the [quality standard here](#).

Quality Statement 1: Screening for Risk Factors and Testing for Prediabetes and Type 2 Diabetes

People who are asymptomatic yet susceptible to developing prediabetes and type 2 diabetes have their blood tested at regular intervals determined by their individual risk factors.

Quality Statement 2: Reducing the Risk of Type 2 Diabetes

People with prediabetes and their caregivers collaborate with their care provider to create a tailored plan to prevent or slow the progression from prediabetes to type 2 diabetes.

Quality Statement 3: Identifying and Assessing Mental Health Needs

People with type 2 diabetes are screened for psychological distress and mental health disorders on a regular basis using recognized screening questions or validated screening tools. People who screen positive for a mental health disorder are referred to a health care professional with expertise in mental health for further assessment and treatment.

Quality Statement 4: Healthy Behaviour Changes

People with prediabetes or type 2 diabetes receive education and coaching on healthy behaviour changes, including increasing physical activity, improving diet, managing stress, and quitting smoking. People who have concerns about their weight despite implementing healthy behaviour changes are offered individualized weight management interventions.

Quality Statement 5: Setting and Achieving Glycemic Targets

People with type 2 diabetes, in collaboration with their health care team, set individualized glycemic targets, including glycated hemoglobin (hemoglobin A1C) and other available measures of glycemia. All available data are used to assess whether individualized glycemic targets are achieved and to guide treatment decisions and self-management activities.

Quality Statement 6: Access to a Collaborative Interprofessional Care Team

People with prediabetes or type 2 diabetes and their caregivers have access to a collaborative interprofessional care team to comprehensively manage their prediabetes or diabetes and additional health care needs.

Quality Statement 7: Promoting Self-Management Skills

People with prediabetes and type 2 diabetes and their caregivers collaborate with their interprofessional care team to create a tailored self-management plan based on their needs and preferences, with the goal of enhancing their ability to participate in their diabetes management.

Quality Statement 8: Screening for Complications and Risk Factors

People with type 2 diabetes are screened for complications and risk factors at diagnosis and at regular follow-up intervals.

Quality Statement 9: Cardiovascular Protection

People with type 2 diabetes receive care that incorporates an individualized cardiovascular risk reduction approach.

What's next?

Remember, everybody is different.

The support you need and the care plan you develop with your care team will be unique to you.

This conversation guide is only a starting point.

You may have other topics you want to cover with your care team. It's important to speak with them about any other questions or concerns.

Need more information?

If you have any questions or feedback about this guide, please contact us at qualitystandards@ontariohealth.ca or 1-866-623-6868.

For more reading on type 2 diabetes, read the quality standard at hqontario.ca/qualitystandards