

## Learn How to Make Healthy Lifestyle Changes to Control Blood Sugars and Fight Diabetes

There are more than a million people living with diabetes in Michigan and an additional 2.6 million with prediabetes. Nationally, Type 2 diabetes is the fifth most prominent chronic condition affecting 5.5% of commercially-insured Blue Cross members, according to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association [Health Index](#). In fact, 50% of U.S. adults are affected by an obesity-related chronic disease, which can include prediabetes, diabetes, high cholesterol and hypertension.

By educating yourself and your loved ones, you can better understand the risk factors and how to prevent this life-altering condition. Here's some information that can help:

### What is diabetes?

When we digest food, carbohydrates and starches break down into blood sugar, also known as blood glucose. This triggers our bodies to produce insulin, a hormone naturally made by the pancreas to regulate glucose levels in the blood. If you have diabetes, your body either doesn't provide enough insulin, or doesn't provide any at all. This metabolic condition can be a result of age, race, medical history, genetics, stress, diet and exercise, especially with Type 2 diabetes.



### Uncontrollable vs. controllable factors

When it comes to preventing diabetes, there are certain risk factors that are out of our control. While some people are genetically predisposed to diabetes, others can be impacted by race, ethnicity, age and medical history. Conversely, there are lifestyle choices that can help to lower the risk of diabetes. Weight gain is one of the leading causes of Type 2 diabetes. Therefore, nutritious, well-balanced and portion-controlled meals are important. Exercise and physical activity are also keys to regulating weight and living a healthy lifestyle. Though many people don't think of high stress, lack of sleep and the use of tobacco, recreational drugs and alcohol use in relation to diabetes, these factors can impact a variety of hormones in the body, which can cause weight gain.

Research shows that overweight or obese people can lower their risk for getting Type 2 diabetes by 58% by losing 5% to 7% of body weight. And, exercising moderately for 30 minutes a day, five days a week also helps prevent it.

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