

Take the Steering Wheel with Diabetes

Do you ever think about your risk of getting type 2 diabetes? You should because health officials are sounding the alarm for a diabetes epidemic *and* because people can delay – and in some cases even prevent – the onset of type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is also known as “adult-onset” because it used to appear later in life. Sadly, that is not true anymore. More and more children are developing type 2 diabetes. In the working-age population, the prevalence of diabetes increased by over 70 percent in 30- to 39-year-olds from 1990 – 1998, and by 55 percent in 40- to 49-year-olds from 1990 – 1999, according to studies done by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Researchers point the blame finger at Americans’ growing waistlines. Excess weight gain essentially wears out the body’s capacity to produce and use insulin. Insulin performs the vital role of signaling blood cells to absorb blood sugar or glucose. If the message doesn’t get through, the body’s main source of fuel – i.e., glucose – escapes through urine without being used.

The good news is many people can restore normal glucose levels just by making lifestyle changes. A 2002 study found that individuals with pre-diabetes avoided or delayed the onset of full-blown diabetes by losing 7 percent of their body weight and exercising at least 150 minutes per week.

Find out if you are at risk.

Ask your doctor if you should have your blood glucose levels tested during your next office visit. If so, he or she will conduct a Fasting Plasma Glucose Test (FPG) or an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT). Bright Wood’s Basic option covers

Diabetes Symptoms

Many people have no signs or symptoms – or they are so mild they go unnoticed. Nearly six million people in the United States have type 2 diabetes and do not know it.

- Increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Fatigue
- Increased urination, especially at night
- Weight loss
- Blurred vision
- Sores that do not heal

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

80 percent of the lab work and the Plus option pays 85 percent once you’ve met your deductible and if you see a preferred provider (see the Health and Wellness Plan booklet for out-of-network provider rates). Regular fasting tests typically cost \$10, while you can expect to pay around \$50 for a three-hour, four-specimen tolerance test.

Take control.

Diabetes is serious; it is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. Complications include blindness, kidney failure, and even limb amputations. Heart disease and strokes are two to four times more common in those with diabetes.

Diabetes is also controllable. Follow your doctor’s instructions. It can be an expensive condition to manage and Bright Wood’s medical plan helps you afford glucose monitors, test strips, prescription medications, equipment, office visits, and hospitalizations.

Bright Wood added a new benefit on May 1 to reduce your out-of-pocket costs for diabetic supplies even further. Purchase your diabetes-related monitor, test strips, and prescription medications all on one

day – even if you buy your supplies at different pharmacies – and you pay only one co-pay of either \$10 or \$25 (amount depends on the medication). Blood pressure, cholesterol, and other medications prescribed in relation to diabetes are included in the one-time co-pay.

Bright Wood’s Health and Wellness plan also covers Innovative Care Management’s Living Well With a Chronic Condition Program. Calling 1-800-862-3338 puts you in contact with a nurse who will work closely with you, your family, and your physician to help you manage your diabetes or pre-diabetes. The free supplemental program includes educational materials as well as assistance locating specialized equipment and referrals. The ICM nurse can also offer a sympathetic ear when you just need someone to listen.

What Factors Increase My Risk for Type 2 Diabetes?

- I’m overweight.
- I have a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes.
- My family background is African American, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic American/Latino.
- I have had gestational diabetes, or I gave birth to at least one baby weighing more than 9 pounds.
- My blood pressure is 140/90 or higher, or I have been told that I have high blood pressure.
- My cholesterol levels are not normal. My HDL cholesterol (“good” cholesterol) is 35 or lower, or my triglyceride level is 250 or higher.
- I am fairly inactive. I exercise fewer than three times a week.
- I’m over 45 years old.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services