



FEATURE STORY • BROUGHT TO YOU BY LAS HEALTH EDUCATION

# Understanding Diabetes



Awareness, Prevention, and Self-Management Tips

**Diabetes does not check a passport.** It touches nearly every family – and the good news is that it can be delayed, managed, and in many cases prevented.

## 1 What Is Diabetes?

# DIABETES AWARENESS

Glucose is the sugar from food – the fuel for your body. Insulin is the key that lets glucose into your cells. Without that key working properly, sugar builds up in the blood instead of fueling the body.

### Type 2

90% OF CASES

Cells become resistant to insulin. Strongly influenced by lifestyle.

### Prediabetes

#1 PREVENTION WINDOW

Blood sugar higher than normal but not yet diabetes. Fully reversible.

### Gestational

DURING PREGNANCY

Develops during pregnancy; raises Type 2 risk by 40–60%.

### Type 1

AUTOIMMUNE

Not preventable. Requires daily insulin for life.

### KNOWLEDGE CHECK #1



**Q: Which type of diabetes develops during pregnancy and usually resolves after delivery?**

A. Type 1 B. Type 2 C. MODY D. Gestational



**Answer: D** — Gestational. Women who had it should be screened every 1–3 years afterward.

## 2 The Scale of the Problem

**97.6M**

U.S. adults with  
prediabetes

**38.4M**

Americans with  
diabetes

**80–90%**

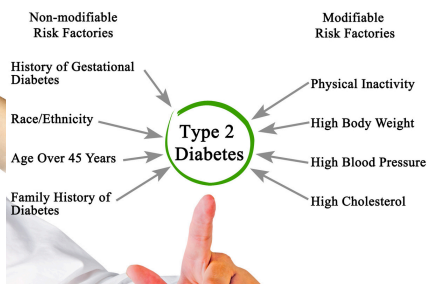
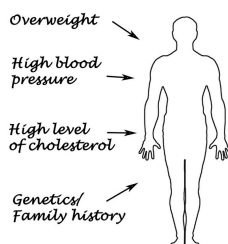
**1 in 4**

are undiagnosed

Hispanic and Latino adults are 1.3× more likely to have diabetes than non-Hispanic white adults. Black adults are 60% more likely to be diagnosed. In New Jersey, 1 in 10 adults has diagnosed diabetes — higher in low-income, urban, and immigrant communities. These disparities reflect decades of inequity in food, healthcare, and economic opportunity.

## 3 Who Is At Risk — and Why?

### Diabetes Risk Factors



### CAN CHANGE

Body weight • physical activity • blood pressure • diet.

### CANNOT CHANGE

Family history • ethnicity • age 35+.

### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

**FQHCs cannot deny care based on immigration status.** HIPAA protects your records. Free interpreters are a federal right. Many patients pay **\$0–\$20 per visit.**

## 4 Warning Signs Not to Ignore

- **Frequent urination & thirst** — classic early signs of high blood sugar.
- **Extreme fatigue** — cells aren't getting the glucose they need.
- **Blurry vision** — sugar swells the lens of the eye.
- **Slow-healing wounds** — high glucose impairs immune response.
- **Tingling or numbness** — in feet and hands; can indicate nerve damage.



### CALL 911

If someone has **fruity-smelling breath, vomiting, confusion, or extreme weakness with high blood sugar** — this is a medical emergency.

### KNOWLEDGE CHECK #2

**Q: What percentage of people with prediabetes are unaware they have it?**

**A.** 10% **B.** 40% **C.** 65% **D.** 80–90%

**Answer: D** — 80–90%. Eight out of 10 have never been told. Prediabetes has no symptoms — the only way to know is a blood test.

## 5 Food as Medicine — Without Giving Up Your Culture

No one is asking you to stop eating rice, beans, plantains, soup joumou, or arroz con pollo. Small changes in preparation and portion produce dramatic changes in blood sugar.

### THE DIABETES PLATE METHOD



½ plate

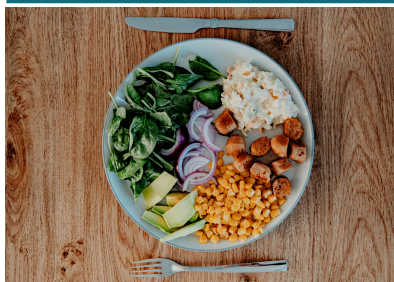
Non-starchy vegetables — spinach, cabbage, okra, peppers, carrot, vegetables.

¼ plate

Lean protein — chicken, fish, eggs, beans, lentils.

¼ plate

Quality carbs — brown rice, sweet potatoes, whole grains.



**YOUR CULTURE IS NOT THE ENEMY**

Haitian legumes, black beans, lentils, and Caribbean vegetable stews are among the **best diabetes-protective foods** you can eat.

**ONE SMALL WIN**

Replace one 12 oz soda (**39g sugar!**) with water each day.

**6**

**Movement: The Most Underused Medicine**

150 minutes/week of moderate activity + 7% weight loss cuts Type 2 risk by 58% — twice as effective as Metformin (31%) in the landmark DPP study. For adults 60+: 71% reduction.

**58%**

Type2 risk cut with 150 min/wk +7% weight loss

**71%**

Risk cut for adults 60+

**10 min**

Walk after meals cuts blood sugar 20–30 mg/dL

**2x**

More effective than Metformin

**You don't need a gym:**

- **10-minute walk after meals** — cuts post-meal blood sugar 20–30 mg/dL.
- **Dancing** — kompa, salsa, or merengue.



- **Gardening** – light-to-moderate intensity, builds strength.
- **Soup cans** – as inexpensive hand weights.
- **Yoga / stretching** – improves insulin sensitivity.

### KNOWLEDGE CHECK #3

#### Q: How does exercise lower blood sugar?

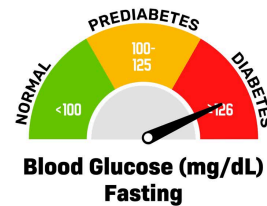
**A.** Sweat removes it **B.** Muscles absorb glucose; insulin sensitivity improves **C.** Reduces insulin **D.** Speeds digestion

**Answer: B** – Working muscles absorb glucose directly from the blood, and exercise improves how cells respond to insulin.

## 7 Know Your Numbers

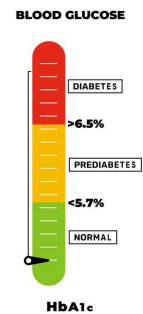
### FASTING GLUCOSE

Normal	<100 mg/dL
Prediabetes	100–125 mg/dL
Diabetes	≥126 mg/dL



### HbA1c (3-MONTH AVERAGE)

Normal	<5.7%
Prediabetes	5.7–6.4%
Diabetes	≥6.5%

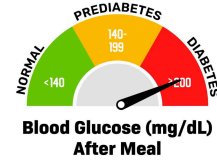




## RANDOM GLUCOSE

### Diabetes

≥200 mg/dL with symptoms



### SCREENING GUIDANCE

USPSTF recommends screening all adults 35–70 with overweight. **For Hispanic, Black, Asian, and Pacific Islander adults – screening at any age if overweight is recommended.**

## 8

## The ABCs of Diabetes Management

### A

#### A1C below 7%

Each 1% reduction cuts eye, kidney, and nerve damage risk by 25–40%.

### B

#### Blood Pressure below 130/80

Controls cardiovascular strain – the #1 cause of death in people with diabetes.

### C

#### Cholesterol: LDL below 100

Protects arteries against plaque buildup that diabetes accelerates.

### MEDICATIONS ARE TOOLS, NOT PUNISHMENT

**Metformin** is the gold-standard first-line treatment. **GLP-1 drugs** (Ozempic, Trulicity, Wegovy) are newer options. **Insulin** is the most effective glucose-lowering medicine there is – not a sign of failure.

### NO SMOKING

**Tobacco worsens every diabetes complication – heart, kidney, eye, and nerve. Quitting at any age cuts risk dramatically.**



### KNOWLEDGE CHECK #4

**Q: An A1C of 6.2% is:**

**A.** Normal **B.** Prediabetes **C.** Diabetes **D.** Inconclusive

**Answer: B** – Prediabetes. The intervention window – lifestyle changes here can prevent up to 70% of prediabetes cases from becoming diabetes.

### TAKE ACTION THIS MONTH – CHOOSE ONE STEP THIS WEEK

- 1. Schedule an A1C test.
- 2. Take a 10-minute walk after dinner – tonight.
- 3. Swap one soda a day for water.
- 4. Try the Plate Method at one meal.
- 5. Share this newsletter with one family member.
- 6. Reach out to LAS – we'll walk you through it.



### WHERE TO GET HELP IN NEW JERSEY

<b>Newark CHC</b>	Sliding fee, no immigration questions.
<b>Zufall Health</b>	Multiple NJ locations, large Spanish-speaking population.
<b>Mary Eliza Mahoney</b>	Rutgers, Newark – community-based diabetes care.
<b>Trinitas Regional</b>	Certified diabetes education program.
<b>NJ FamilyCare</b>	1-800-701-0710 (multilingual, Medicaid).
<b>NJ 211</b>	Dial 2-1-1 – 24/7 multilingual, no ID required.
<b>Insulin Cap</b>	Eli Lilly – \$35/month.
<b>GoodRx</b>	40–80% off medication prices.



## RECAP — FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER

- 1. Diabetes is preventable. Lifestyle changes cut risk by 58%.
- 2. Know your numbers — A1C, blood pressure, cholesterol.
- 3. Recognize early signs: thirst, urination, fatigue, blurry vision, slow healing.
- 4. Your cultural foods aren't the enemy — adapt, don't eliminate.
- 5. Help is available in NJ — much of it free. You are not alone.

## CONNECT WITH LAKAY ACCÈS SANTÉ

*We speak English, Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole.*

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Sources: American Diabetes Association — Standards of Care (2024); CDC — National Diabetes Statistics Report; NJ Diabetes Action Plan (2023); Diabetes Prevention Program (NEJM, 2002).

