

Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter®

NOVEMBER 2024

Reverse Type 2 Diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes, the most common type of diabetes, is a long-term condition and occurs when blood sugar is too high. It develops because of insulin resistance, which typically originates from several contributing risk factors, including weight gain, eating habits, a sedentary lifestyle, and/or a hereditary predisposition to insulin resistance.

Type 2 diabetes symptoms usually appear over time. Typical symptoms can include frequent urination, blurry vision, fatigue, excessive thirst and unexplained weight loss. However, diabetes can develop without symptoms as well. Screening tests at your regular checkup can find it.

While type 2 diabetes can't be cured, it can be reversed, according to medical experts. Reversing diabetes involves carefully controlling blood sugar levels by maintaining them through physical activity and a healthy diet without using glucose-lowering medication. Weight loss can also help sustain blood sugar levels. When nutrition and physical activity are not enough to help with weight loss, some health care providers recommend weight loss medication or bariatric surgery.

To reverse or put type 2 diabetes into remission, take these steps:

1 Exercise frequently. Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. Incorporate cardiovascular and strength training into your routine (e.g., use hand weights while walking briskly). **Note:** Always get your health provider's approval before starting a new exercise routine.

2 Eat nutritiously. Enjoy whole foods (fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein) and reduce ultra-processed foods (e.g., sweets, salty snacks, fast food). Limit sugary drinks, deep fried foods and refined grains (as found in baked goods). **Tip:** Meet with a dietitian to develop a personalized plan.

3 Sleep more. Experts recommend adults get seven to nine hours daily.

4 Drink more water. The Institute of Medicine recommends a daily intake of 13 cups for men and nine cups for women. How much you need depends on your circumstances.



November is Diabetes Month.

BEST bits

■ **Reminder: Touching your face with dirty hands can spread infections.** Important times to wash your hands include before, during and after preparing food, after using the bathroom and before and after eating.

■ **Wash your hands with soap and cold or warm water for at least 20 seconds.**

Bacteria can hide under your fingernails, so scrub them when washing up, and keep your hands away from your face. Learn more at [cdc.gov/handwashing](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing).



■ **Family Health History Day is November 28.** As you enjoy

Thanksgiving with family, use the time to discuss your family's medical history. What you learn can help protect the health of you and your family. If relatives have developed cancer, diabetes or other diseases, you may be at a higher risk and need more frequent screenings. To learn more, search [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for **Family Health History**.



■ **During Healthy Skin Month in November, review these face-saving tips** from the American Academy of Dermatology.

Wash your face gently after you wake up and before going to bed to reduce bacteria buildup. No scrubbing; it can worsen acne and rosacea. Use a mild alcohol-free cleanser, rinse well and apply a moisturizer containing sunscreen. To avoid premature skin aging and skin cancer, don't smoke and don't tan. Outdoors, always use sunscreen labeled **broad spectrum** and SPF 30 or higher. Check for signs of cancer; routinely look for spots that differ from others or that change, itch or bleed. See your health care provider if you spot something odd. Learn more [aad.org](https://www.aad.org).

Jazz Up Your Breakfast

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Your morning meal helps break the fast after a night's rest.

Breakfast provides energy to start your day, plus breakfast eaters have a lower risk of developing heart disease and type 2 diabetes compared to breakfast skippers.

Many traditional breakfast foods, such as eggs, yogurt and fruit, offer lots of beneficial nutrients. In fact, studies show that people who eat breakfast get more nutrients in their diet because of their nutrition boost in the morning. Here's how you can plan the best morning meal.

Make sure it contains protein, which provides a feeling of fullness and keeps you satisfied for hours. Aim for 20 to 30 grams of protein from foods including:

- Greek yogurt.
- Fish, such as smoked salmon or tuna.
- Beans or tofu.
- Eggs.
- Cheese.
- Nuts, seeds and nut butters.

Choose foods with fiber, which helps keep you full, helps manage cholesterol levels and keeps you regular. Foods with fiber include:

- Fruits and vegetables.
- Nuts, seeds and nut butters.
- Whole grains, such as oats, whole-grain wheat and brown rice.

Meal ideas: Here are five tasty ways to combine these ingredients into delicious, nutritious breakfast options:

- 1. Overnight oats:** Refrigerate a mix of yogurt, oats and fruit overnight for easy mornings (see recipe below).
- 2. Avocado toast:** Skip butter. Add fiber-rich avocado instead. Top with eggs, cheese or mashed beans for protein.
- 3. Breakfast burritos:** Wrap eggs, black beans, sweet peppers and tomatoes in whole-grain tortillas. Freeze ahead and defrost on busy mornings.
- 4. Panwiches:** Use high-protein pancakes as bread to make sandwiches. Fill with peanut butter and banana, or scrambled eggs and vegetables.
- 5. Smoothie bowls:** Serve smoothies in bowls topped with granola, nuts and fruit.



TIP of the MONTH

Turkey Stuff(ing)

Turkey and stuffing are traditionally found on the Thanksgiving dinner table.

Did you know it's better (and safer) to cook these two foods separately? Stuffing cooked inside the turkey cavity slows down the cooking time for an already long process. Plus, the stuffing and inside of the turkey may not reach a safe internal cooking temperature (165°F), which increases the risk of salmonella. Enjoy both, but cook them separately. To learn more, go to www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/ and click on **Safe Food Handling and Preparation**.



Mixed Berry Overnight Oats

- 2 cups 2% Greek yogurt
- ¾ cup old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup nonfat milk
- 2 tbsp chia seeds
- 1½ cups mixed berries, fresh or frozen

In a mixing bowl, combine yogurt, oats, milk and chia seeds.

In a small container or jar with a lid, add a layer of yogurt mix, then a layer of berries. **Repeat** layers until container is full (usually 3 layers of each). **Top** container with lid and store in the refrigerator overnight. **Enjoy** for breakfast. **Optional:** Add a drizzle of honey or maple syrup.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 335 calories | 25g protein | 9g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 3g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 38g carbohydrate | 15g sugar (0g added sugar) | 10g fiber | 20mg sodium



EASY recipe



Think Before You Drink

Alcohol is common during holiday meals, and it's easy to drink too much. As part of your healthy eating regimen, remember to consume alcohol moderately. If you don't drink alcohol, don't start. If you enjoy alcohol, remember that moderate drinking is considered one drink a day for women, or two drinks a day for men (one drink is 5 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer or 1.5 ounces of other alcohol). Alternate alcoholic drinks with water, tea or seltzer. And never drink and drive. Take a cab or share a ride with a non-drinking driver.



Q: Video game addiction?

A: Many Americans play video games, but overuse can interfere with sleep and daily responsibilities, and may lead to anxiety or depression. An addiction or gaming disorder may be developing when users:

- Can't stop.
- Spend money on games they can't afford.
- Lie about the extent of their gaming.
- Make gaming a priority over other important life activities.
- Continue gaming even after suffering harmful consequences.
- Become anxious or irritable when prevented from gaming.



However, the following strategies may help keep gaming in check:

- Keep video games and other screens out of bedrooms.
- Designate screen-free times, such as meals or during family activities.
- Balance screen time with in-person social activities.
- Install apps to limit screen use or set timers to provide breaks.

Consider a consultation with a mental health professional — preferably one with expertise in addictions — if you need more help. If you are someone who self-harms, please seek professional mental health treatment.

— Eric Endlich, PhD

How to Avoid Being Late

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Do you find you're often running late, despite your best intentions? Consider some possible reasons:

- ✓ You like to do things perfectly, so it's hard for you to get started on tasks.
- ✓ You're easygoing and don't see why being a bit late is such a big deal.
- ✓ You're trying your best but struggle to plan your schedule effectively.
- ✓ You enjoy the rush of doing everything at the last minute.
- ✓ You mean well, but you get sidetracked easily and lose track of time.

Take heart: Chronic lateness is not an incurable condition. Here are some tips to try:

Revise your time estimates. However long you think something will take (e.g., preparation, travel), add 25% to 50% to your guess.

Prepare for transitions. Prior to going somewhere, whether your daily commute or a vacation, pack what you'll need well in advance, check traffic updates and leave extra time.



Skip doing just one more thing. You may be tempted to squeeze in just one more task before heading out the door; resist this temptation and get going.

Plan to arrive early, or you'll probably be late. If arriving early seems like a waste of time to you, bring something to do so you'll feel productive.

Consider the needs of others. Thinking about the impact of your lateness on others may give you an added incentive to be prompt.

Pause before saying yes to requests. Consider first whether you really have the time to take on more.

With practice, you'll be on your way to a more punctual you.

Coughs are normal with colds or flu.

But they can interfere with sleep. Over-the-counter cough medications have side effects and aren't recommended for young children. Instead, the FDA recommends non-drug remedies: Drink lots of warm liquids to soothe your throat and thin mucus. Using a humidifier and taking warm showers calm coughs by putting moisture in the air. For adults and older kids, cough drops or hard candy can decrease cough-triggering throat tickles. Don't go to bed with a hard cough drop or candy in your mouth. If coughs persist or worsen, call your health care provider.



Q: What is self-harm?

A: Some people hurt their bodies on purpose, usually beginning in the teen or early adult years. This behavior, more common in women, may be short-lived or may become a long-term habit. People who self-harm sometimes say that it gives them a sense of relief or control, or helps them cope with difficult feelings.

While self-harm is different from attempting suicide, if left untreated it can progress to more dangerous and life-threatening behaviors. Those who've been abused, neglected, bullied or otherwise traumatized are at higher risk for self-harm. People who self-harm often feel ashamed and try to keep it a secret.

Cutting oneself with a sharp object is a well-known means of self-harm, but other methods may include:

- Punching walls, hitting oneself or banging one's head.
- Self-inflicting burns.
- Pulling out hair.
- Piercing, scratching or picking at skin.

If you know someone who self-harms, encourage them to seek professional mental health treatment.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



The Truth About Vaping and Snuff

Contrary to what some believe, vaping and smokeless tobacco are not harmless. They both contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and hazardous to your health. Let's take a look at both.

A popular myth is that vaping is just harmless water vapor, when in fact 99% of vape products sold in U.S. convenience stores — including flavored vape products — contain nicotine. **Note:** One of the most popular pod choices among teens for vaping devices contains 100% nicotine, the same amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.

In addition to nicotine, vaping contains harmful ingredients that can lead to serious health conditions. These ingredients include ultrafine particles; diacetyl; heavy metals, such as nickel, tin and lead; and vitamin E acetate. These can cause long-term lung damage; lung disease, such as EVALI (e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury); nicotine poisoning; and addiction. Vaping at a young age (teens) can harm the developing brain and cause memory problems and depression. Short-term problems, including wheezing, coughing, sinus infections, asthma, and shortness of breath, can occur.



Snuff tobacco is equally dangerous. People either snort dry snuff through their nose or place it between their gum and cheek or behind their lip (dipping). Prolonged use of smokeless tobacco, such as snuff, can lead to a myriad of problems, such as heart disease, stroke, nicotine poisoning, tooth decay, gum disease and mouth, esophageal and pancreatic cancers, not to mention bad breath and yellow teeth.

The good news? There is help. To quit vaping, smoking or dipping, call the National Cancer Institute's **Quit Line** at 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848).

Q: What are off-label meds?

A: Using a drug in a way that is not FDA-approved is referred to as “off-label” use. A medication is used off-label when it’s employed for a condition that it’s not approved to treat, given in a different way, or given at a different dose. Medications approved only for adults that are prescribed for children is another example of off-label use.

Off-label use may pose some risks. Most medications go through a rigorous review of safety and efficacy before the FDA approves them. This process is omitted when drugs are used off-label. The FDA has not determined that the drugs are safe and effective for unapproved uses. There could be long-term side effects, interactions with drugs or diseases, or other unknown risks.

Before using off-labels medications, talk to your health care provider. What other treatment options are available? It’s important to weigh the potential risks and benefits for your individual situation with your provider before taking off-label medicine.

– Elizabeth Smoots, MD



November is
Lung Cancer
Awareness
Month.



Lung cancer is a main cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. Although smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer, other risk factors include exposure to radon and pollution. The American Cancer Society urges you to learn about symptoms, including nagging coughs, and why low-dose CT screening for lung cancer is crucial if you are age 50 or older and are a current or former smoker and have at least a 20-pack-a-year history of smoking. Learn more at [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).

Get Rid of That Pain in the Neck

It’s no surprise neck pain is a common complaint. Some neck pain is caused by accidents and health conditions and, if sudden and severe, should be checked out by your health care provider. But most neck pain is the result of bad posture or muscle weakness, often resulting from staring down at phones and gazing for hours at computer screens.

Neck pain can be annoying and keep you from getting a good night’s sleep and doing your best work. It can contribute to headaches, too. The good news is self-help measures can help relieve and even prevent neck pain.

The Cleveland Clinic recommends these range-of-motion exercises to gently stretch neck muscles:

- Push your head backward into your car headrest or against your locked hands held at the back of your head; hold for 30 seconds.
- Try to slowly move each ear in the direction of each shoulder, ten times on each side.
- Roll your shoulders backwards and down ten times.
- Squeeze your shoulder blades together ten times.

Neck pain-relieving tips from Mt. Sinai pain experts:

- Try over-the-counter pain relievers, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen or aspirin.
- Apply an ice pack to neck pain for the first two or three days. Then use heat via warm showers, a heating pad or a warm compress.
- Ask a friend or partner to gently massage the painful area.
- Sleep on a firm mattress with a pillow that supports your neck.

If your neck pain is chronic after several weeks or worsens, talk to your provider.



**IdentityTheft.gov:
How Can It Help you?**



IdentityTheft.gov is a federal website that offers guidance if your identity is stolen or compromised. The website is chock-full of useful information as a one-stop place where consumers can find all the information necessary for handling identity theft needs.

If the unthinkable happens, make **IdentityTheft.gov** your first resource. Easy checklists guide you through the aftermath of identity theft. You can also use form letters to send to credit reporting agencies and companies affected by the theft. And, you'll see contact information for the most popular credit reporting agencies so that you don't have to search for it during an incredibly stressful time.

If you believe your identity has been compromised, go to **identitytheft.gov** to create a report. This report notifies businesses and other organizations that your identity has been stolen, and it will make the recovery process more manageable. After creating your report, print the provided recovery plan and follow the instructions to make sure you take all the necessary steps.

The website is also helpful for **preventing identity theft**. Numerous tips and free resources are available through the site you can share with others in your physical and online community.

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, MBA



National Drowsy Driving Prevention Week is November 3 to 9.

Driving Fatigued: Don't Do It

When you're fatigued it can impair your judgment, reaction time, focus and awareness of hazards — all particularly dangerous when it comes to driving. According to the latest AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety study, drowsy driving accounts for more than 300,000 accidents, more than 100,000 injuries and 6,400 fatalities annually. Driving after being awake for more than 20 hours is similar to driving with a blood alcohol level of 0.08%, which is the legal limit in the U.S. If you struggle to keep your eyes open, are yawning frequently, nodding off, missing signs or exits, drifting lanes or difficulty maintaining your speed, that's a signal to stop driving. The best way to prevent drowsy driving accidents is to get enough quality sleep the night before, and use medication that doesn't cause drowsiness.

Other tips include:

- ❖ Find a safe place to pull over for a quick, ten-minute power nap if you feel fatigued.
- ❖ Seek help if you have trouble sleeping. Sleep experts recommend at least seven to nine hours of sleep per night.
- ❖ Join or organize a carpool.
- ❖ Use the AC or open a window for fresh air during a long drive to rouse senses.
- ❖ Turn up the tunes. Listen to lively music on your drive.
- ❖ Plan ahead. Try to plan your trip when you are normally most alert.
- ❖ Don't drink alcohol or use drugs before you drive.
- ❖ Drink caffeinated beverages before your drive but know that they will not sustain during a long trip you if you are drowsy.



SAFETY CORNER



Lithium Battery Safety

Did you know that lithium batteries can overheat and release toxic gases, as well as cause fires and explosions? Follow these guidelines to prevent a disaster from happening:

- ✓ Follow manufacturers' guidelines when charging lithium batteries.
- ✓ Stop charging once the battery is fully charged. Use only the charger that came with your device.
- ✓ Don't charge your device on a soft surface, such as your bed, sofa or pillow.
- ✓ Keep batteries and devices at room temperature if possible.
- ✓ Discontinue using your device if it shows signs of battery damage, including unusual odor, change in color or shape, and leaking or odd noises.
- ✓ Store batteries away from flammable items.
- ✓ Recycle your used batteries. For a recycler near you, contact your municipal waste agency. Never put lithium batteries in the trash.
- ✓ Don't let discarded batteries pile up in the same place.

Your Personal Exercise Plan

You know exercise is key for living your healthiest life. Most adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity weekly and two days of muscle-strengthening activity, according to the CDC.

It makes sense to get checked by your health care provider, who can also provide any needed guidance for your exercise goals and determine what kind and amount of exercise you can safely do before you start any new exercise regimen.

It's important to determine your short- and long-term goals as you create a personal exercise plan, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Do you need to lose weight? Gain stamina? Lower your risk of specific health problems or improve your health in general? Writing down your goals can help you focus and track your progress over time.

While that may not seem too difficult at least on paper, real life can get in the way. But there are ways to fit in regular exercise into your schedule by figuring out a workable exercise plan.

Bottom line: Improving your fitness level is doable, no matter how busy your life is. It takes planning and finding activities that work for you and that you look forward to.

NIH's tips for making and sticking to a workout plan:

You can strengthen your bones with weights at home or at a gym. Start slowly and increase over time. Stretch to improve flexibility. Protect heart health with aerobic activity.

Finding ways to exercise that you enjoy is key to success. Do you like solitary walks? Want to work out in classes at a local gym? Always wanted to try yoga? See what makes both your body and your brain feel good. Don't struggle with a workout you hate. Look for other options.

Enlist social support by connecting with others. Enlist an exercise partner or two. Other people can help us start, continue or increase how much we exercise. People with greater social support tend to exercise more, according to the NIH.

After a month or two, review your goals. You may be surprised to see you have made progress. Are you sleeping better? Feeling stronger? Have you increased your muscle mass? Are your clothes a little bit looser?

If you haven't met your goals, don't give up. Consider other options, such as a personal trainer, or classes online or in person.



Genes May Hold a Key to Fitness



Researchers are working on exercise prescriptions. They aren't talking about medications or a one-size-fits-most exercise plan. Instead, they are delving into how genes influence the way different types of exercise impact people individually. **The goal:** Prescribe exercise in a way that provides the most benefit to an individual.

Obviously, people are built differently and have muscles that differ in size and strength. It's one reason why some people seem easily suited to different sports. For example, there are people who seem to be natural-born runners with long, lean bodies and others who develop large, strong muscles working out and are great at football or boxing.

But the idea that genes influence body shape, strength, stamina and more doesn't just apply to athletic pursuits. Scientists are studying how bodies are not only built differently but react differently to exercise, including how exercise impacts blood glucose and the body's microbiome (the bacteria, fungi and viruses that naturally live in and on our bodies).



DR. ZORBA'S corner

Iron Supplements

One hundred years ago iron deficiency anemia was common, but for most of us this is a thing of the past. Today, iron supplements may be recommended for women who menstruate heavily, pregnant moms, the frail elderly who often lack good nutrition, those with inflammatory disease, vegetarians who don't eat enough iron-containing foods, folks with kidney failure and some female endurance athletes who often limit their nutrition unnecessarily. Iron supplements are not recommended for the general public, especially those who eat meat or are older than age 50, because they may cause constipation and nausea and can interfere with the diagnosis of colon cancer, which often presents as anemia. — Zorba Paster, MD

STUDY: Ultra-Processed Foods and Long-Term Health

Research reveals that eating ultra-processed foods can have long-term health risks. A 30-year study published in *The BMJ*, confirmed that ultra-processed foods, in particular packaged baked goods, ready-to-eat meat, sugary cereals, snacks, sweetened drinks and dairy desserts, are associated with a slightly higher risk of death. These foods often contain added sugar, artificial flavors and other additives while lacking vitamins and fiber. The study involved 74,563 women and 39,501 men with no history of cancer, cardiovascular disease or diabetes, who submitted health and lifestyle information every two years and completed a detailed food questionnaire every four years.

Research results: Participants consuming the least ultra-processed food (three servings daily) had a lower risk of death compared to those consuming the most (seven servings daily). The latter group experienced a 4% increase in overall mortality risk and a 9% rise in the risk of other deaths, including an 8% higher risk of neurodegenerative diseases.

Moderation is key. Reducing ultra-processed food intake benefits long-term health, though research is needed to refine ultra-processed food categorization and to verify these findings in different populations.

STUDY: Rising Colorectal Cancer Rates

Colorectal cancer is no longer an old person's disease. In fact, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) reports it's now the top cause of cancer deaths in people ages 20 to 49. The NCI reports the rise in colorectal cancer in younger people appears linked to environmental factors, including smoking, obesity, nutrient-poor food, lack of exercise and exposure to toxins in air and water.

Washington University School of Medicine (St. Louis) researchers have found four warning signs of colorectal cancer in people diagnosed before age 50: abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, diarrhea and iron deficiency anemia. Having one of these signs doubles the likelihood of early-onset colorectal cancer; having three or more signs triples the risk.

Bottom line: Get regular checkups, exercise, and reduce intake of ultra-processed foods (e.g., chips, soft drinks, packaged soups, fried foods, candy). See your health care provider as soon as possible if you have any colorectal symptoms.

While early-onset colorectal cancer isn't common, cases have been increasing since the mid-1990s. Most people should start screening at age 45. Screening isn't routinely recommended for people younger than age 45 who don't have risk factors, such as genetic markers for colorectal cancer or a first-degree relative who has had the disease

Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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