

**Q: What is pre-diabetes?**

**A:** Pre-diabetes affects an estimated 16 million Americans. It refers to a condition in which blood sugar levels are higher than normal-but not yet diabetic. Health officials are giving pre-diabetes a new name to encourage people to get tested before they have full-blown diabetes.

Diabetes is the 5th deadliest disease in America. It's a disorder of metabolism in which people cannot produce, or use, insulin-a hormone that allows the body to use sugar. Our cells get energy from sugar, but without insulin, the sugar cannot pass from the blood into the cells. When sugar builds up in the blood instead of cells, its called diabetes. Cells starved of energy can damage your eyes, kidneys, nerves or heart. As many as half the people who get this disease show no outward symptoms, hence the name "silent killer" for diabetes. This year, about 1 million people will be diagnosed with diabetes. For these people, the chance of having heart disease or a stroke are 2 to 4 times higher than the normal population. The reason "pre-diabetes" is being highlighted is because early detection can turn back the clock and restore normal blood sugar levels.

**Q: Can I find out if I have pre-diabetes?**

**A:** There are 6 major risk factors: 1) people over the age of 45 2) those with a family history of diabetes 3) people who are over-weight 4) those who don't exercise 5) people with high triglycerides or low HDL (good) cholesterol 6) ethnic minorities such as Native Americans, African Americans, or Latinos. Your doctor has 2 common blood tests to check if you are pre-diabetic. If you are over 45 and overweight, you should ask your doctor for a pre-diabetes blood test. If the test shows your blood sugar is normal, you can wait another 3 years to be tested, but if you have pre-diabetes, you should be tested every 1 to 2 years. Medicare will pay for 80% of the cost of diabetes testing when ordered by your doctor. Although there is no cure for diabetes, it can be treated with a combination of moderate exercise, diet, and medications. To learn more about this "new" disease, call 1-800-Diabetes, or look on the web at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

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