

# At risk of type 2 diabetes



Being at risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) means that you have factors that increase your likelihood of developing the condition, but you have not yet been diagnosed with it. T2DM is a chronic condition where the body either becomes resistant to insulin or does not produce enough insulin, resulting in hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar level)s. The good news is that, for many people, T2DM can be delayed or prevented through lifestyle changes and risk factor management (such as blood pressure and cholesterol).

## Key risk factors for T2DM

- Age - being >45 years old
- Family history - having a close relative (parent, sibling) with type 2 diabetes
- Ethnicity - people of South Asian, African, Caribbean, or Middle Eastern descent are at higher risk.
- Being overweight/ obese - particularly if excess weight is around the waist (central obesity).
- Lack of physical activity
- Diet - a poor diet high in processed foods and sugar content increases the risk.
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Gestational diabetes - if a woman developed gestational diabetes during pregnancy, she is at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life.
- Other conditions and markers of insulin resistance such as Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS).

## Leicester diabetes score

The Leicester diabetes score is a free, online questionnaire that can help assess your risk of developing T2DM. It evaluates several factors, including: age, gender, weight, ethnicity, family history of diabetes, activity levels, and blood pressure. By entering these details, the tool provides a score indicating your risk level—low, moderate, or high. Based on your score, it offers advice on next steps, such as lifestyle changes (e.g., improving diet and increasing physical activity) or seeking further medical advice, especially if you're at high risk.

## Interventions

If you're at risk of T2DM, you can take steps to lower your risk:

- Maintain a healthy weight - losing even a small amount of weight can significantly reduce your risk.
- Exercise regularly - aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week.
- Eat a balanced diet - focus on whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats while reducing sugar and processed foods.
- Monitor blood sugar - regular checks can help spot any early signs of diabetes. If you have been diagnosed as 'at risk' this will be part of your routine care.

The earlier that risk is identified, the more effectively you can take preventive actions to maintain your health.

## References:

- Gray LJ, Taub NA, Khunti K, Gardiner E, Hiles S, Webb DR, Srinivasan BT, Davies MJ. The Leicester Risk Assessment score for detecting undiagnosed Type 2 diabetes and impaired glucose regulation for use in a multiethnic UK setting. *Diabet Med.* 2010 Aug;27(8):887-95
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