Can Prediabetes Turn Into Type 2 Diabetes?

by REBECCA PACIOREK

What Is Prediabetes?

Has your doctor told you that you might be prediabetic? Does your family history make you curious? Or, maybe you are experiencing some unusual symptoms and thinking, “What if?”

Let’s talk about prediabetes, from what it is, what some of the symptoms are to look for, to how you might stop its progression.

How Is Prediabetes Diagnosed?

Saying you are prediabetic doesn’t mean much without some numbers to back it up. A true diagnosis of prediabetes will mean that your blood sugar falls in the range of 100-125 when blood glucose is measured by fasting. The other test for prediabetes is going to be the Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c).

- A prediabetes level is 5.7 percent and 6.4 percent.
- An HbA1c > 6.5 percent is considered a diabetes glucose level.

In a nutshell, prediabetes happens when there is more glucose than your body can use up. This happens because you are either insulin resistant, you are taking in too many carbs for your body to use up, or your liver is making too much.

Remember at the beginning of the blog when we mentioned family history? Having a family history of diabetes or prediabetes does put you at greater diabetic risk.

Some other risk factors are having polycystic ovarian syndrome or gestational diabetes, smoking, ethnic heritage, and being overweight.

Symptoms of Prediabetes

Now that we know what prediabetes is “officially,” what does it mean to your person? How will you feel when you have prediabetes? Here are the most common symptoms:

- **Excessive thirst.** Having all that extra glucose in your system prevents the water you take in from being absorbed into your bloodstream. This, of course, makes you feel like you are always thirsty. And, in extreme cases, not quenching this thirst and drinking enough can cause dehydration, so it’s best always to have some water handy.
- **Excessive urination.** You guessed it. If you’re going to have excessive thirst and take in more water, you’re also going to end up with excessive urination. But, it’s not just all that water coming back out. Many times, if your kidneys can’t absorb all the excess sugar, they will flush it out.
- **Blurred vision.** Oddly, the blurred vision is also water related. When you have a lot of glucose in your

blood, as part of preventing it from being absorbed into the bloodstream, this also means it can pull some of the water from other tissues- even the lenses of your eyes. If this happens, it may cause you not see as clearly or focus as well. Many people with diabetes, myself included, can tell when their sugars are elevated by the way they see.

- **Skin tags or patches of dark areas** are also common diabetic symptoms. These are most likely to be found under your neck, underarm areas, and the groin.
- **Lack of sleep or fatigue.** These two go together. If there's no other reason for you to feel tired, such as lack of sleep, illness, etc. then you might be fatigued because your blood sugars aren't at the right levels. In addition to this, prediabetes can also cause a lack of sleep. Remember when we talked about that vicious cycle above of excessive thirst leading to drinking more and then more excessive urination? Yeah, that's one thing that will keep you up at night.
- **Unexplained weight gain or loss.** Most diabetics/prediabetics are overweight and would be thrilled to lose some weight. But, if you lose (or gain) weight without working at it, this is a sign that something is off and should be discussed with your doctor.
- **Mood swings.** With all of the above things going on in your body, it's no surprise that you might experience some mood swings causing a bit of nervousness, anxiety, and irritability.

Does Being Prediabetic Mean I Will Develop Type 2 Diabetes?

No. That's the great news in all of this. When you are diagnosed as being prediabetic, this is your wakeup call to get serious in doing something about better health. Your doctor will give you all sorts of tips but here are the main things you will be working on.

- **Carb control and diet.** Naturally, since diabetes is having too much sugar in your body, the less you add, the better. You will want to work on having a low carb and low glycemic index diet.
- **Exercising.** Exercise will not only help you lose weight and put you at less diabetic risk, but exercise helps to lower your blood sugar counts, so it's a double duty helper.
- **Possible medications.** If blood tests have diagnosed you for prediabetes, your doctor may discuss taking some blood glucose lowering medicines as preventive. Try to be open to the conversation and be sure to ask any questions you have.
- **Sleep apnea discussion.** Do you snore? If so, you might want to talk to your doctor about the possibility of having sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is a condition where you stop breathing several times per night. This condition is a risk factor for diabetes and many other diseases, so it's certainly worth a discussion.

Getting a diagnosis of prediabetes can be scary. However, once you're armed with knowledge and a true desire to make changes for your health, you have a great opportunity to beat this.

Have you been diagnosed with prediabetes? What are you doing to change?