**Everything Your Workforce Should Know About Type 2 Diabetes**

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. According to the [latest research](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p0718-diabetes-report.html) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 100 million Americans have diabetes or prediabetes (high blood sugar) – making it one of the most common illnesses in our nation.

Diabetes is a condition that occurs when your body has trouble managing its blood sugar levels. The body either doesn’t produce enough insulin, or it resists insulin. Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of diabetes and accounts for about [90-95%](https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/aag/diabetes.htm) of all diagnosed cases of diabetes in adults.

Unfortunately, diabetes is a chronic condition without any known cure. However, through medication and healthy lifestyle changes, the condition can be managed. Because diagnoses of type 2 diabetes continue to increase, it’s extremely important that your employees are educated about the largely preventable illness.

Read on to learn some of the basic facts behind type 2 diabetes, along with some tips for spreading awareness in the workplace:

**Common Risk Factors**

There are many common risk factors for type 2 diabetes and prediabetes. According to [Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/type-2-diabetes/symptoms-causes/syc-20351193), some of the most common include:

* Obesity
* Fat distribution (if fat is stored primarily in the abdomen)
* [Sedentary lifestyle](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/sedentary-lifestyle-vs.-active-lifestyle-infographic)
* Family history
* Race
* Older age (45 or older)
* Polycystic ovary syndrome
* [High blood pressure](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/what-do-the-new-blood-pressure-guidelines-mean-for-employee-wellness)
* Abnormal [cholesterol](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/simple-ways-to-raise-your-hdl-cholesterol-the-good-kind-of-cholesterol) and triglyceride levels

**Symptoms**

Sometimes those with type 2 diabetes or prediabetes do not experience symptoms right away. The symptoms of diabetes can be unpleasant and potentially lead to serious complications if left unchecked or untreated. Some signs and symptoms of type 2 diabetes include:

* Increased thirst
* Frequent urination
* Increased hunger
* Weight loss
* Fatigue
* Blurred vision
* Slow-healing sores or frequent infections
* Areas of darkened skin

Anyone experiencing these signs or symptoms should see their doctor right away to be tested for type 2 diabetes.

**Costs**

According to the [American Diabetes Association](http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics/) (ADA) the total cost of diagnosed diabetes in the U.S. in 2017 was $327 billion. The direct medical costs were $237 billion while reduced productivity cost $90 billion. These costs are expected to continue to rise as diagnoses increase.

**Prevention**

While type 2 diabetes is becoming increasingly prevalent, it’s important to know that it is also largely [preventable](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/start-focusing-on-prevention-in-your-employee-wellness-program). There are many healthy habits that can help prevent type 2 diabetes.

*Weight loss.* If you are overweight, losing some weight and obtaining a healthier body mass index (BMI) is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes.

*Active lifestyle.* Sitting less and moving more will help prevent both prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. Try to stand and move more throughout the workday and aim for at least [150 minutes](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/how-much-should-you-be-exercising) of exercise each week to lower your risk.

*Balanced diet.* Maintaining a balanced diet is an important aspect of your overall health and can reduce your risk for many chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes. Focus on eating more [real foods](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/help-your-employees-eatreal-with-the-real-food-challenge) – like veggies, fruits, lean protein, whole-grains, and healthy fats – and eat less processed, sugary foods.

*Annual testing.* One in three U.S. adults are at risk for type 2 diabetes, but most don’t know it. That’s why it’s so important to keep up with your key health numbers. It’s especially important for adults 45 years old or older to get tested annually, as they are at a higher risk of developing diabetes.

*Medication.* If you are prediabetic or at a high risk for the disease, your doctor may recommend certain medications to keep things in check. Along with healthy lifestyle choices, [research](https://www.webmd.com/diabetes/preventing-type-2-diabetes) has shown that these medications can lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 31%.

**What Employers Can Do**

Employers have a great opportunity to help spread awareness and education about type 2 diabetes. By promoting [healthy habits in the workplace](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/8-habits-every-employer-should-demonstrate-to-encourage-a-healthy-lifestyle) and offering [regular health screenings](https://www.totalwellnesshealth.com/biometric-screening/), you can help employees reduce their risk of developing prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. Here’s how employers can help:

*Biometric screenings.* By offering free, [onsite biometric screenings](https://www.totalwellnesshealth.com/biometric-screening/), employees will be more likely to keep up with their key health numbers, including blood glucose, cholesterol, BMI, and triglycerides – all of which can help employees learn if they’re at risk for diabetes. Onsite screenings are much more convenient than employees having to use valuable PTO to schedule an appointment with a doctor. Be sure to host yearly health screenings so that employees can keep track of their health year after year.

*Opportunities for physical activity.* Employees should never feel chained to their desks all day. This promotes a sedentary lifestyle that can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes. Offer employees plenty of opportunities for physical activity. Some ideas include:

* [Standing desks](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/make-your-own-standing-desk)
* Walking clubs
* Exercise [challenges](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/motivate-employees-to-participate-in-wellness-challenges)
* Walking meetings
* Exercise balls in replacement of chairs
* Onsite gym
* Gym discounts or vouchers
* Onsite yoga

*Healthier food options.* Most [office snacks](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/is-the-food-at-your-office-sabotaging-employee-health) consist of fatty, sugary, processed foods like donuts, bagels, or breakfast pizza. Employers should offer healthier options for employees whenever food is provided – whether it be a [potluck](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/host-a-healthy-office-potluck), conference, or lunch outing. Be sure to also evaluate the food choices in company vending machines, [breakrooms](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/optimize-your-breakroom-for-wellness), and kitchens.

*Host a wellness program.* [Workplace wellness programs](https://www.totalwellnesshealth.com/employee-wellness-programs/) are one of the best and easiest ways to keep your employees healthier and happier. By [putting a wellness program in place](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/how-to-launch-a-successful-wellness-program), employees will become more educated on their health status and learn more about adapting a healthier lifestyle that will help prevent chronic illness.

Type 2 diabetes is a serious illness that has become more and more common throughout the years. Help your workforce become more aware of the disease by promoting some healthy habits and offering education. Visit <http://www.diabetes.org/> to learn more.