

Reduce your diabetes risk

According to Dr Lebo Masunyane, clinical research physician in endocrinology for Eli Lilly South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, though some risk factors such as age, ethnicity and family history can't be changed, many other factors can help reduce the risk of diabetes.

"Some people who are overweight won't develop type two diabetes in the absence of other risk factors, while someone of a healthy weight might," says Masunyane. "But managing your weight, eating healthy foods in the right quantities and being physically active are the best ways to reduce your risk. If you are overweight, losing just 5% of your body weight can greatly reduce your chance of developing type two diabetes."

Here are some important tips and considerations:

Do you really know what you eat and drink during the day?

Keeping a food diary for a couple of weeks is an invaluable tool to get a really good look at your eating habits so you have a realistic base line from which to make any improvements. Get educated about healthy food choices and how to make the best decisions when buying your groceries. Talk to a dietician about what the right calorie intake is for your gender, weight, age, health and weight-loss goals.

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Dr Lebo Masunyane

Clinical research physician in endocrinology

It's not just what's on your plate, but how much

Are you checking your portion sizes? Your plate should be half filled with vegetables or salad, with the rest of the plate divided between

5 portions

Fruit and vegetables will give your body the vitamins, minerals and fibre it needs – and we should all aim to eat five or more portions a day



5%

If you are overweight, losing just this much of your body weight can greatly reduce your chance of developing type two diabetes

protein foods, such as lean meat, fish, eggs or beans, and starchy carbohydrate foods. If you're not sure, ask a dietician to work out a programme for you. Measure and weigh your food for a few weeks so you get used to proper portion sizes and you'll soon have a handle on the right amount of food for you. Remember that even overeating on healthy food is not good for your waistline.

Cut back on salt

Aim to eat 6g of salt or less a day. Too much salt can raise your blood pressure, which can increase your risk of type two diabetes, stroke or heart attack. Around 70% of our salt intake comes from processed foods – so try to cut back on pre-prepared foods and try flavouring your food with herbs and spices instead of salt. As far as possible, eat food as close to its natural state – the more it is processed, the higher the salt and fat content.

Eat five a day

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Eat healthy carbohydrates

Choose low glycaemic index options such as brown rice, whole grains, sweet potato, whole wheat pasta, oats and so on. Whole-grain, high-fibre varieties of starchy foods are better options.

– Citizen reporter



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