

# Ask the Expert at Stony Brook University Hospital

**I** am overweight and have a family history of diabetes. Can I do something to prevent getting the disease?

Being overweight and having a family history of diabetes does put you at a higher risk of developing diabetes, as does increasing age, ethnic origin, and a sedentary lifestyle. Diabetes is also more common in African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics. An estimated 18 million Americans have diabetes; over 5 million of those people are unaware they even have the disease. Another 40 million Americans have "pre-diabetes," a condition in which the blood glucose (sugar) levels are higher than normal, but not high enough for the diagnosis of diabetes.

#### Warning signs of diabetes include:

- excessive thirst and urination
- blurred vision
- unintentional weight loss (in spite of an often increased appetite)

Physicians diagnose diabetes with a fasting blood glucose test, which is a simple blood test. The test measures the sugar in your blood.

#### Sugar levels range from:

- Normal - less than 100mg/dl
- Pre-diabetic - 100-125mg/dl (at high risk of developing diabetes in the next few years)
- Diabetic - over 125mg/dl



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#### Reducing Your Risk

The good news is that people with pre-diabetes can prevent diabetes if they lose weight and exercise regularly. In fact, the Diabetes Prevention Program, a recent NIH funded study, showed that losing merely seven percent of one's body weight and moderate exercise, such as walking or biking for half an hour a day, five days a week, cuts the risk of developing diabetes by more than half. In fact, diet and exercise were more effective than taking medicines

commonly used to treat diabetes. Also lifestyle changes appeared more effective in individuals over 60. So, as you plan for 2006, make sure you get your fasting blood sugar test done during your annual physical and start working toward losing weight and exercising regularly.

The Diabetes Center at Stony Brook provides comprehensive Diabetes Care to people with diabetes. For more information, to schedule an appointment, or to volunteer in our ongoing research studies, call 631-444-4000.

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