

Prediabetes Turnaround

12 Steps to Turn Around Your Prediabetes

By Jack Challem

The initial shock of your prediabetes diagnosis may be wearing off. And now you're wondering what you can do, short of taking prescription drugs, to prevent type 2 diabetes. The good news: Many and perhaps most people can reverse their prediabetes. At the very least, you can significantly improve your blood glucose numbers.

It's going to take a little effort. And you'll have to change the lifestyle and eating habits that set the stage for prediabetes. But I can tell you—you'll quickly feel *so much* better!

1. Be Mindful of Stress. Stress is the often-overlooked contributing factor in prediabetes. When we're stressed, we tend to skip breakfast or lunch. Eventually our blood sugar crashes—and then we end up wolfing down junk food. Stress also ramps up production of the hormone cortisol, which helps deposit all those unhealthy calories around our waist.

2. Learn to Say No. Friends and family want you to eat what they eat. After all, food is love, and if you reject a relative's fried chicken or dessert, you're rejecting their love. Unfortunately, it's all too easy to let your well-intentioned diet get sabotaged. Even if you choose not to explain your situation to family and friends, politely but firmly let them know of your determination to eat healthier foods. And practice saying "No thanks."
Reality check: Turning down foods might make *them* uncomfortable about *their* food choices.

3. Beware of Food Cravings. Cravings are like addictions. Wheat is the biggie—the prime ingredient in pasta, bread, pizza, bagels, and muffins. Desserts, which tend to use dairy and sugars, are another minefield. So, take a cue from Alcoholics Anonymous: One bite is too many, a thousand is not enough. Curbing your cravings takes discipline, but it becomes easier after a few weeks.

4. Foods to Eat. Emphasize quality protein (chicken, fish, grass-fed beef) and high-fiber vegetables. If you opt for fresh foods instead of almost anything in a package, you'll be on the right track. *Exceptions:* Monitor your potato portions—they're worse than ice cream for blood sugar. Go easy on pork—it's high in a substance that promotes inflammation.

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5. Foods to Minimize. Cut way back on desserts (other than fresh fruit salad), anything white (white bread has little nutritional value), and all deep-fried foods (chicken, shrimp, fries). These foods lead to a blood sugar roller coaster—one hour you're up, another you're down, and they also pack on the pounds.

6. Plan Your Meals. Don't wait until you're hungry. This means thinking about meals and recipes (which don't have to be complicated), and shopping at the market once or twice a week. Start writing your next shopping list today. *Tip:* Shop mostly on the perimeter of supermarkets, because this is where you'll find the freshest foods.

7. Read Food Labels. The fine print gives you a heads up on ingredient, but the red flags aren't always obvious. Low fat often means high in sugars or refined (high glycemic) carbs. Ironically, the healthiest foods—fish, chicken, veggies—aren't usually labeled.

8. Eat a Healthy Breakfast. It really is true: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Don't skip it. Even if you're not hungry, have a bite or two of something with protein. Good choices: an egg or a half-sandwich made with leftover rotisserie chicken, along with some apple slices. Remember that the impact of carbs may be higher at breakfast due to higher cortisol (stress hormone) levels, so be sure to count your carbs!

9. Make the Time to Cook. With today's hectic schedules, we know this can be a challenge. Cooking can give you optimal control over the foods you eat and their ingredients, so it's a great way to live healthier. Make the time to prepare simple meals, such as a chicken breast sautéed in olive oil, steamed veggies, brown rice. Cook extra, so you have leftovers—and at least a second meal.

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10. Eat Smaller Portions. We tend to use visual cues to determine how much to eat. Did you know that the size of dinner plates has increased over the past several decades? Serve your home meals on salad plates.

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11. Navigating Restaurants. Opt for relatively “safe” restaurants such as Greek (skip the pita bread), Japanese (avoid tempuras, which are deep fried), and Italian (pass on the pastas and bread). Many restaurants serve large portions, so walk in planning to take home a doggy bag. Divide the food on your plate in half, eating some now and saving the rest for tomorrow. Don’t even go into a fast-food restaurant unless you want to be sabotaged.

12. Opt for Healthier Snacks. Raspberries or blueberries are great, as is homemade fruit salad. A *small* dish of dry roasted nuts is also fine, but unsalted varieties are best, and never eat straight from the can or bag.

Reviewed by Jason C. Baker 05/13 . 