

Fighting diabetes: a question of balance

Experts now believe exercise and diet can work wonders

AARP
April 2001
Vol. 42, No. 4, Washington, D.C.



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America is in the midst of an epidemic of diabetes that may cut the life expectancy of diabetic 50-year-olds by as much as 10 years—but there's good news for those who make lifestyle changes.

Experts now believe that the onset of type 2 diabetes, the most common variety, can be delayed or even prevented altogether by moderate weight loss and increased exercise.

Anne Daly of the American Diabetes Association contends that lifestyle changes can prevent up to 60 percent of new diabetes cases.

"The prescription isn't a magic pill," Daly says. "Diabetes prevention is about exercising instead of flopping in front of the TV, about eating fruits and vegetables instead of fast-food burgers." • • •

The best prevention: a healthy life

For those at high risk who haven't developed diabetes, there is encouraging news from a wide variety of studies that is borne out in everyday medical practice. Exercise (as little as a half-hour a day) and a healthy diet—high in fruits and vegetables, low in saturated fat—greatly reduce the odds of developing full-blown diabetes.



"The seriousness of this disease has been understated precisely because it takes so long for complications to become life-threatening," says Daly. "When a 50-year-old is diagnosed with cancer, well, you know that it has to be treated promptly or you're not going to be on the earth a year from now."

