

# For Your Benefit

provides a variety of timely information related to your health care benefits and needs

## Healthy changes can stop diabetes before it starts

Prediabetes is a serious health condition that can increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, or stroke. People with prediabetes have blood sugar levels that are higher than normal, but not high enough for a diagnosis of diabetes. Without lifestyle changes to improve their health, 15 to 30 percent of people with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes within five years.

### Who is likely to have prediabetes?

Most people with prediabetes don't know they have the condition. Only seven percent of the 79 million Americans with prediabetes are aware of their condition. You are most likely to develop prediabetes and type 2 diabetes if you:

- Are 45 years of age or older
- Are overweight
- Have a parent or sibling with diabetes
- Are African-American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander
- Developed diabetes while pregnant (gestational diabetes), or gave birth to a baby weighing nine pounds or more
- Are physically active less than three times a week
- Have glucose levels that are higher than normal
- Have a blood pressure of 140/90 or higher
- Have cholesterol (lipid) levels that aren't within the ideal range; [HDL cholesterol ("good" cholesterol) should be less than 35. Triglyceride level should be higher than 250.]
- Have skin around your neck or in your armpits that appears dark, thick and velvety
- Have blood vessel problems affecting your heart, brain or legs
- Have polycystic ovary syndrome

If you fit this profile, consult with your doctor for testing. If your blood test shows you are prediabetic you may have to have your blood glucose (blood sugar) levels checked again in six months to a year.

### You can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes

Having prediabetes doesn't mean you'll definitely develop type 2 diabetes. If you lose just 5 to 7 percent of your current weight, eat right, and become physically active, you have more than a 50 percent chance of delaying or not developing type 2 diabetes, even if you are prediabetic.

Preventing type 2 diabetes can mean a healthier and longer life without serious complications from the disease, such as heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure and amputations. Taking small steps like losing 10 or 15 pounds, building up to 30 minutes of physical activity daily, and following a low-calorie, low-fat food plan can help you reap the big rewards of a healthier life.

### Know your blood glucose levels

	<b>Fasting Blood Glucose Test</b> (Blood test taken after 8 or more hours of fasting)	<b>2-Hour Oral Glucose Tolerance Test</b> (Blood tests taken 2 hours or less after drinking a glucose solution)
<b>Normal</b>	Below 100	Below 140
<b>Prediabetes</b>	100-125	140-199
<b>Diabetes</b>	126 or above	200 or above



# Prevent shingles to prevent pain

*Dan woke up one morning with a burning sensation on his chest. He also felt like he had the flu. Over the next few days, a rash of fluid-filled blisters developed in the same area as the burning sensation. The rash was extremely painful, a burning, itching feeling. In fact, just the mere touch of his bed sheets on his chest made him cringe. Dan finally went to his doctor. One look at the rash and the doctor told him that he had shingles.*

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is a painful and dreaded illness. Those who have it know about the stinging, tingling and burning pain from the blistering rash. Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox.

After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays dormant in the nerve tissues of the body. For reasons that aren't fully known, the virus can reactivate years later, causing shingles.

A shingles rash usually appears on one side of the face or body. The rash blisters and scabs over in two to four weeks. In addition to the severe pain, you may experience fever, headache, chills and upset stomach.

A shingles infection can lead to even more serious conditions. The skin may become discolored where the rash once was. Even more severely, 20 percent of those with shingles can have post-herpetic neuralgia, or severe pain that lasts weeks, months, or even years after the rash has cleared.

Although anyone who has had chickenpox can later have shingles, the illness is more common in people 60 and older. It's also more common in people whose immune systems are weakened because of a disease such as cancer or from taking drugs such as steroids or chemotherapy.

## Shingles virus can plant the seed

Shingles, the illness itself, isn't highly contagious; however, the virus that causes shingles can spread from someone with an active case to someone who has never had chickenpox. The new host might develop chickenpox, but not shingles.

The virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the blisters, not through sneezing, coughing or casual contact.

Here are some ways to keep the shingles virus from spreading:

- Keep the rash covered.
- Don't touch or scratch the rash.
- Wash your hands often to prevent the spread of varicella zoster virus.
- Until your rash has crusted over and you're no longer contagious, avoid contact with:
  - Pregnant women who have never had chickenpox or the varicella vaccine
  - Premature or low birth weight infants
  - Immunocompromised persons (such as persons receiving immunosuppressive medications or undergoing chemotherapy, organ transplant recipients, and people with HIV infection).



## There is help

Although there are antiviral medications available to help lessen the duration of the outbreak, the best action you can take against shingles is to be vaccinated against the virus. A single dose of the shingles vaccine, known as Zostavax<sup>®</sup>, is recommended for people 60 and older. The shot can lower your chances of getting shingles by about half.

If you get the shot and still develop shingles, you're likely to have much less pain and for a much shorter time. Even people who have had shingles can receive the vaccine to help prevent future occurrences of the disease. Your State Health Plan fully covers the Zostavax vaccine, whether it's rendered by an in- or out-of-network provider, by a pharmacy, visiting nurse agency or health department.

Shingles is a condition no one wants. Though the vaccine doesn't guarantee you won't get chickenpox or shingles, it can reduce your chances of complications and reduce the severity of the disease. If you're 60 years old or older, talk with your health care provider to see if you're a good candidate. Chances are you're a good candidate for getting the vaccine, which will increase your chances of avoiding shingles.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/shingles/>

## Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury

Getting enough sleep is essential to staying healthy and preventing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and depression. Insufficient sleep is also responsible for motor vehicle and machinery-related crashes, causing substantial injury and disability each year. In short, drowsy driving can be as dangerous — and preventable — as driving while intoxicated.

More than one-fourth of Americans report that they may occasionally not get enough sleep, while nearly 10 percent experience chronic insomnia. Do you have a sleeping problem? Look at the list below and, if you have these signs, contact your health care provider. Remember, sleep is a necessity, not a luxury.

### Sleep disorder symptoms

Are these sleeping problems a chronic issue for you? If so, contact your health care provider for help.

- ✓ You take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep.
- ✓ You wake up and can't fall back to sleep.
- ✓ You wake up too early in the morning.
- ✓ You feel tired despite sleeping seven or more hours.
- ✓ You feel sleepy during the day and fall asleep unexpectedly or at inappropriate times during the day.
- ✓ You fall asleep within five minutes if you have an opportunity to nap.
- ✓ Your bed partner says that you snore loudly, snort, or make choking sounds, or even stop breathing for short periods.
- ✓ You have creeping, tingling feelings in your legs that are relieved by moving or massaging them when you try to fall asleep.
- ✓ You have vivid, dreamlike experiences while falling asleep.
- ✓ You have episodes of sudden muscle weakness when you are angry, fearful or when you laugh.
- ✓ You feel as though you can't move when you first wake up.
- ✓ Your bed partner says that your legs or arms jerk often during sleep.
- ✓ You regularly depend on caffeinated beverages to stay awake.

**Source:** National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health, <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dph/>

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State of Michigan Retirees

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