

# Consumer health: Alcohol, tobacco and diabetes

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November is National Diabetes Month, which makes this a good time to learn more about preventing and treating diabetes.

Diabetes mellitus refers to a group of diseases that affect how your body uses [blood sugar](#). The underlying cause of [diabetes](#) varies by type. But no matter what type of diabetes you have, it can lead to excess sugar in your blood. Too much sugar in your blood can lead to serious health problems.

The two types of chronic diabetes conditions are Type 1 diabetes and Type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes can develop at any age, although it often appears during childhood or adolescence. Type 2 diabetes, which is more common, also can develop at any age, although it's more common in people over 40. Prediabetes means you have a higher-than-normal blood sugar level, but it's not yet high enough to be considered Type 2 diabetes.

Healthy lifestyle choices can reduce your risk of Type 2 diabetes. If you've already received a diagnosis of diabetes, healthy lifestyle choices can reduce your risk of complications. If you have prediabetes, [lifestyle changes](#) can slow or stop the progression to diabetes. Lifestyle risk factors for diabetes include being overweight and sedentary.

Alcohol and tobacco use also may increase your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. And the more you drink or smoke, the greater the risk.

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