

Few patients successfully treat their type 2 diabetes through weight loss, study suggests

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Weight loss and diabetes remission. Credit: Diana Polekhina, Unsplash (CC0, creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/)

A new study finds that very few patients diagnosed with type 2 diabetes are able to achieve normal blood glucose levels through weight loss

alone. A team led by Andrea Luk of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, report these findings in the open access journal *PLOS Medicine*.

Clinical trials suggest that people with type 2 diabetes can control their [blood glucose levels](#) without medication if they lose weight and keep it off. However, it is unknown how many patients can achieve remission through weight loss alone under real-world conditions.

In the new study, researchers looked at 37,326 people in Hong Kong who were newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes to see whether—and how long—patients could control the disease through weight loss.

The researchers discovered that only 6% of people achieved diabetes remission solely through weight loss by about eight years after diagnosis. For people who initially achieved remission, two-thirds had elevated blood glucose levels by three years after diagnosis.

These rates are significantly lower than in [clinical trials](#), where remission occurred in up to 73% of patients at one year post-diagnosis. People with the greatest weight loss in the first year were most likely to have sustained remission.

The study shows that controlling type 2 diabetes through sustained weight loss is possible in real-world settings, but that few patients will achieve normal blood glucose levels through weight management alone, especially over the long-term. One reason for the discrepancy with clinical trials is that trial participants receive intensive lifestyle interventions, including holistic support for dietary changes, [physical exercise](#) and mental health.

The researchers conclude that patients should receive early weight management interventions as a way to increase the odds that they will achieve sustained remission. Furthermore, the data suggest that early

weight management interventions increase the odds of sustained remission and that sustained lifestyle changes are likely to be paramount.

Luk adds, "Greater [weight loss](#) within the first year of diabetes diagnosis was associated with an increased likelihood of achieving diabetes remission. However, the incidence of diabetes remission was low with only 6% of people achieving remission over eight years, and half of those with initial remission returned to hyperglycemia within three years indicating poor sustainability of [diabetes remission](#) in real-world setting."

More information: Wu H, Yang A, Lau ESH, Zhang X, Fan B, Ma RCW, et al. (2024) 1-year weight change after diabetes diagnosis and long-term incidence and sustainability of remission of type 2 diabetes in real-world settings in Hong Kong: An observational cohort study, *PLoS Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1004327](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1004327)

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