

Can diabetes be reversed?

23 August 2019, by Barbara Quinn



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Registered dietitian and diabetes educator Charlene Dorcey said it as gently as she could:

"We've gotten fluffier as a nation ... and as we've gotten heavier, we also have more [diabetes](#)." (Diabetes now affects almost one of every 10 people in the US.)

What's more scary, she continued, is the number of Americans with prediabetes, a condition that makes us five to six times more likely to get diabetes than the average person. As of 2017, that number stood at 84 million people.

Yet there is some good news. We now know much more about how to prevent and treat diabetes than we ever did before. And while diabetes still remains a life-long condition that can't be completely reversed, we can do some things to put Type 2 diabetes into remission, experts now report.

Number one: Lose weight if you are overweight. If you have prediabetes, even a modest weight loss can help prevent prediabetes from turning into full-blown Type 2 diabetes.

And if you already have diabetes, attack it as soon

as you are diagnosed. Studies show that overweight people with Type 2 who vigorously lose weight and increase their physical activity can prolong their body's ability to manage blood sugars. And I'll say it again: Regular [physical activity](#) is the most powerful anti-diabetes weapon we have.

We've also come a long way in how we control diabetes, says Dorcey. For example, this was the protocol for treating a patient with diabetes back in 1917:

"For 48 hours after admission to the hospital, keep the patient on an ordinary diet to determine the severity of his diabetes. Then starve him with no food allowed except black coffee and 1 ounce of whiskey every 2 hours from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. The whiskey is not an essential part of the treatment. It merely furnishes a few calories and keeps the patient more comfortable while he is being starved."

Thankfully, nutrition therapy for diabetes is now more palatable and individualized. In fact, there is no longer just one "diabetic diet" since many dietary approaches can work. Diets that successfully control diabetes have these in common, however:

- They are high in dietary fiber. And remember that fiber is only found in plant-based foods such as vegetables, fruit, beans, whole grains and nuts.
- They are low in added sugar and refined grains. "Refined" means a grain has lost most if not all its [dietary fiber](#). Check the label.
- They include healthful forms of fat, most notably [omega-3](#) (fish oils) and other polyunsaturated and monounsaturated types. Note also that the Mediterranean-style of eating that includes fish, [olive oil](#) and other plant-based oils has been especially praised as an eating pattern to both improve diabetes control and take good care of our hearts.
- They are personalized by a registered dietitian with expertise in diabetes. Your

local hospital is a good place to start.

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APA citation: Can diabetes be reversed? (2019, August 23) retrieved 22 October 2019 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-diabetes-reversed.html>

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