



New Ways to Fight the Rise in Diabetes

Over the past 30 years the number of Americans diagnosed with diabetes has skyrocketed, from about 6 million in 1980 to almost 19 million today. As this problem spirals out of control, researchers are racing to find new treatments for this devastating disease.

Recently, scientists at Newcastle University in England reported that a 600-calorie-a-day diet appeared to reverse type 2 diabetes in a small group of patients who had diabetes for less than four years. Seven patients out of 10 were still diabetes-free three months after they stopped the extreme eight-week diet, which consisted of meal-replacement drinks and three daily servings of starchy vegetables.

On the surgical front, a weight-loss surgery known as a Roux-en-Y gastric bypass has proven surprisingly effective at reversing type 2 diabetes: 80 percent of patients undergoing this surgery—which involves creating a pouch in the upper part of the stomach and attaching it farther down the small intestine—experi-

ence dramatic remission of their diabetes. These results are seen just days after surgery and before much weight loss occurs.

Such findings have led to a surge of research attempting to understand how gastric bypass affects the

regulation of blood sugar. While it's unclear exactly how this works, most theories focus on the previously underappreciated role of the small intestine and stomach as endocrine, or hormone-releasing, organs. The Roux-en-Y gastric bypass in particular seems to alter specific hormones that help regulate the body's response to sugar.

Still, the last thing I would recommend is that people rely on extreme diets or radical stomach-rerouting surgeries to solve an often preventable problem. If your fasting blood glucose level is above

100, the time to act is now.

The Diabetes Prevention Program, a large multicenter study, has shown that overweight people age 60 or older with pre-diabetes can reduce their diabetes risk by 71 percent if they lose just 5 to 7 percent of their body weight. Most important is getting 150 minutes of physical exercise each week: Physical exertion helps muscle cells better use glucose and can lead to weight loss, which can help ward off diabetes.

Dr. Mehmet Oz is a cardiothoracic surgeon and host of The Dr. Oz Show.

Diabetes BY THE NUMBERS

25.8 million
Americans with diabetes (diagnosed and undiagnosed)

79 million
Americans with pre-diabetes

\$174 billion
Annual cost of treating diabetes

<100 mg/dL
Normal fasting blood glucose level

100–125 mg/dL
Pre-diabetes

>125 mg/dL
Indicates diabetes



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