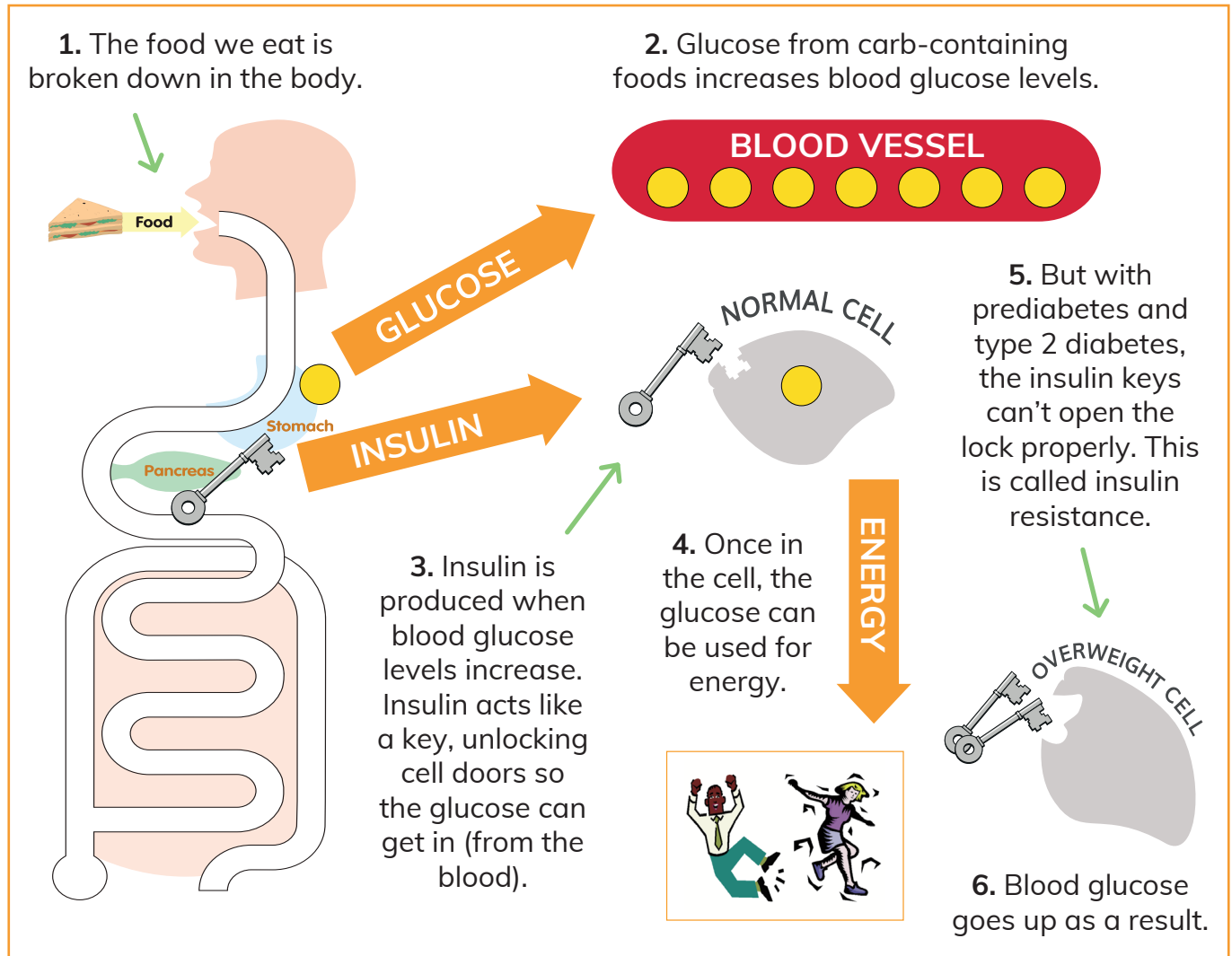


Prediabetes - What I Need to Know



Prediabetes is an earlier stage of type 2 diabetes. Prediabetes can develop into type 2 diabetes if suitable lifestyle changes are not made.

Prediabetes and type 2 diabetes are both conditions where blood glucose levels are higher than they should be. The diagram below explores why this happens.



A blood test called glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) is used to diagnose prediabetes. This test gives an indication of the average level of glucose in your blood over the last two to three months. A reading of between 42 and 47mmol/mol indicates prediabetes. Readings of 48mmol/mol or more are used to diagnose diabetes.

When insulin doesn't work as well as it should (i.e., where there is insulin resistance), more insulin is needed to clear glucose out of the blood. This means that insulin levels are higher than they should be in people with prediabetes.

Insulin resistance and high insulin levels make weight management more difficult. They also increase the risk of a number of health problems.

Prediabetes can be managed through making lifestyle changes. With the right changes, it is often possible to halt, or even reverse, its progression. This is explored further overleaf.



One of the biggest risk factors for prediabetes is being overweight. Any method that can help you lose weight and keep it off will therefore help to manage or reverse prediabetes.

Not everyone with prediabetes is overweight though. If you have been told that you have prediabetes but your body mass index (BMI) is below 25kg/m², consider the following:

- **Are you storing too much fat around your waist?** Fat stored around your middle is more likely to have a negative effect on your health than fat stored elsewhere. Ideally, your waist size should be less than half of your height.
- **Are you stressed?** Regular and/or prolonged stress can have a negative effect on blood glucose levels. Learning to manage stress can therefore help to improve blood glucose management.
- **Are you sleeping well?** A lack of good quality sleep can have a direct impact on blood glucose levels. It can also increase stress levels, and lead to people eating less healthily and being less active. Taking steps to improve sleep can therefore have a big impact on prediabetes management.

Other top tips to help manage prediabetes include:

- **Reduce or omit ultra-processed foods (UPFs)** - Replacing UPFs with real foods can help improve your physical and mental health in a number of ways. UPFs usually have more than five ingredients, often including things you don't recognise.
- **Become more carbohydrate aware** - All carbohydrate-containing foods affect blood glucose levels. Increasing awareness of which foods contain carbohydrates can therefore help you to improve blood glucose management. Many people with prediabetes benefit from reducing the total amount of carbohydrate they have.
- **Reduce or omit snacks** - Unless there is a medical reason to do so, most people do not need to snack. Avoiding snacks helps your body to manage blood glucose and body weight better.
- **Ordered eating** - If your meals include any carbohydrate-containing foods (e.g., potatoes, rice, pasta or bread), eat these last. This may help to slow the release of glucose and blunt the spike in blood glucose levels.
- **Move more** - Your body can use glucose more easily when you have been active. Try to take part in activity that raises your heart rate on most days, and activity that makes your muscles work against a resistance at least twice each week.
- **Take a brisk walk after eating** - Being active after meals can be particularly beneficial for people with prediabetes, as it can help to reduce blood glucose spikes.
- **Break up sedentary periods** - Breaking up periods where you are usually inactive can have extra benefits. Try to move every 20 to 30 minutes, even if that is only to walk around the room for a minute or two.

This topic is explored further on X-PERT programmes and in X-PERT Handbooks.
For more information, visit www.xperthealth.org.uk.