

Weighing the Risks of Diabetes

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently announced that diabetes now affects 20.8 million Americans. In addition, approximately 41 million Americans have pre-

diabetes. Pre-diabetes means that their blood glucose (sugar) is higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as



diabetes. Without intervention, individuals with pre-diabetes are at a much higher risk for developing diabetes.

Diabetes often goes undiagnosed because many of its symptoms seem harmless. **The possible symptoms of diabetes include:** • Frequent urination • Excessive thirst • Extreme hunger • Unusual weight loss • Increased fatigue • Irritability • Blurry vision. If you have one or more of these diabetes symptoms, see your doctor right away.

To help you better recognize your risk for type 2 diabetes, the American Diabetes Association provides a simple, seven-question Diabetes Risk Test. The Risk Test is available in brochure form by calling the Association at 1-800-DIABETES or can be taken online at www.diabetes.org/risktest.

What Is a Heart Stress Test?



A stress test, sometimes called a treadmill test or exercise test, helps a doctor find out how well your heart responds to exertion. It usually involves walking on a treadmill at increasing levels of difficulty, while your electrocardiogram, heart rate, and blood pressure are monitored. **Here are some tips to consider if you will**

be having an exercise stress test: • Follow your doctor's instructions carefully. • To reduce the likelihood of nausea, don't eat or drink for three hours prior to the procedure. Diabetics, particularly those who use insulin, will need special instructions from the doctor's office. • If you have any questions about your medications, ask your doctor. Don't discontinue any medication without first talking with your doctor. (These instructions are generally provided when the test is scheduled.) • Wear comfortable clothing and shoes that are suitable for exercise. • Review any information you're given about the test so you know what to expect. • Expect the test to take approximately one hour. • Tell the doctor or nurses on hand if you feel any unusual pain or discomfort.

Source: American Heart Association, www.americanheart.org

Help for IBS

Are you bothered by irregular bowel habits? This is a problem for many people who have Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), and don't know it.

IBS is the most common of the functional gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, and it can cause symptoms such as abdominal pain, frequent bloating, occasional diarrhea or constipation, or a constant cycle of diarrhea and constipation. The reason for these symptoms isn't clear. Researchers speculate that the nerves and muscles of the bowel simply function abnormally in people with IBS.

Getting Diagnosed

If you think you have IBS, see your doctor for an evaluation. Only a doctor can diagnose IBS. Your doctor will use your symptoms, medical history, and a physical exam to help determine if you might have IBS.

Review this IBS Symptom Checker to see if your symptoms are similar to those that are characteristic of IBS. Mark the symptoms that you've experienced or are experiencing, and take this information with you to your doctor's office.

IBS SYMPTOM CHECKER

GI Symptoms

- Abdominal pain relieved by having a bowel movement, occurring at least 3 days per month in the last 3 months*
- Diarrhea Constipation (infrequent stools that may be hard, dry, and painful) Alternating diarrhea and constipation
- Bloating Mucus in stools Gas Feeling like you still need to have a bowel movement after having one
- Feeling uncomfortably full or nauseated after eating a normal meal

**If you have checked the first item in the list above, and at least two of the three symptoms that immediately follow that first item, call your doctor for an evaluation. These are the dominant IBS symptoms.*

Generalized Symptoms

- Fatigue Muscle pain Sleep disturbance Sexual dysfunction

Upper GI Symptoms

- Heartburn Discomfort in the upper stomach area
- Atypical chest pain

IBS can make daily life difficult, disrupt special plans, and be upsetting emotionally. Taking back control over your bowel habits starts with talking to your doctor, so make an appointment today.

For personalized advice about your symptoms, visit the RealAge Gastrointestinal Center at <http://www.RealAge.com/GICenter/Intro.aspx>.

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