

The Silent – and Preventable – Pandemic That’s Three Times More Deadly Than Covid

November marks Diabetes Month, dedicated to raising awareness of a disease that’s now “a pandemic of unprecedented magnitude,” according to a new report from the International Diabetes Federation (IDF). Globally, 557 million people — more than one in 10 adults — are living with diabetes, a rise of 16 percent (74 million) over the numbers in 2019. Another 541 million adults have prediabetes, an earlier stage of the disease.

Another scary statistic: Diabetes and its complications claimed 6.7 million lives worldwide in 2021, reports IDF, triple the toll for Covid this year (2.2 million). The good news, however, is that type 2 diabetes, the most common form, is both preventable and highly treatable, particularly if it’s caught early. Here’s a look at the latest discoveries about diabetes, new screening guidelines and key facts you need to know.

1. TYPE 2 DIABETES REVERSAL MAY BE MORE COMMON THAN PREVIOUSLY BELIEVED.

In a new study published in *PLOS Medicine* this month, researchers analyzed data from a national Scottish diabetes registry and identified 162,316 adults with a type 2 diagnosis. Of this group, about 5 percent had achieved remission for one year or longer. “That is higher than expected and indicates a need for updated guidelines to support clinicians in recognizing and supporting these individuals,” stated study coauthor Mireille Captieux from the University of Edinburgh [in a news report](#). The team found that disease reversal was most likely to occur in those who had lost weight since their diagnosis and had milder elevations in their blood sugar levels when they were diagnosed. The study adds to [earlier](#)

[research suggesting that type 2 diabetes reversal may be possible for up to 10 years](#) after diagnosis, particularly if the person follows a low-calorie diet. There’s also a lot you can do to avoid getting diabetes in the first place: Check out [our top 10 prevention tips](#).

2. DIABETES IS ON THE RISE, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNGER ADULTS.

The IDF predicts that if current trends continue, the number of people living with diabetes will soar to nearly 800 million, with type 2 accounting for 90-95 percent of cases. Unlike people with type 1 diabetes — an autoimmune disease in which insulin production irrevocably halts because of antibodies that attack and destroy the insulin-producing beta cells of the pancreas — those with type 2 do produce insulin. However, their muscles, fat and liver become insensitive to this hormone, which

normally helps cells use glucose for energy: a disorder known as insulin resistance (IR). Although people often think of type 2 diabetes as an older person’s disease, rates among 30-somethings have soared by 70 percent in recent years, and it’s become increasingly common in teenagers and even kids. The chief culprit is the obesity epidemic, since [studies report](#) that being even a little overweight quintuples diabetes risk and being severely obese multiplies it by 60-fold!

3. NEARLY HALF OF PEOPLE WITH DIABETES ARE UNDIAGNOSED.

The IDF’s latest *Diabetes Atlas* reports that globally, about 45 percent of people with diabetes are unaware of their disease. That’s dangerous, because the longer it goes untreated, the higher the risk for de-

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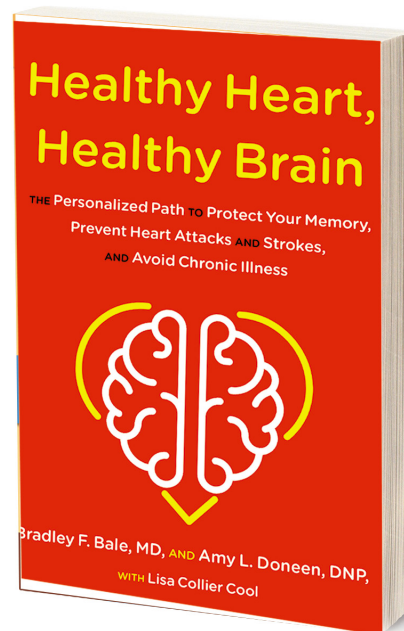
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Advance Praise for Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain

Now available for pre-orders on [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#) and many other online and retail booksellers, Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain by Bradley Bale, MD and Amy Doneen, DNP with Lisa Collier Cool offers a proven, unique and comprehensive plan designed to protect and enhance the health of the heart, brain and other vital organs, as well as the more than 60,000 miles blood vessels that supply them. Here's what one of America's top doctors says about the book and his own experiences with the BaleDoneen Method:

"Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain is a life-saving book! I would know — I am alive today because of Bale and Doneen's extraordinary work. Providing me with top-notch medical advice and treatments for over a decade, they continue to open our eyes to the insidious ways cardiovascular disease can creep into our lives by examining everything from oral health, diets, and sleep patterns to provide precise, extensive, and approachable advice for anyone who picks this book up."



**— DR. JEFF LIFE,
NY Times bestselling
author of The Life Plan Diet**

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bilitating or even life-threatening complications. For example, a person with untreated type 2 diabetes is at as high risk for a heart attack as a nondiabetic person the same age who has already suffered one! Diabetes also dramatically raises risk for strokes, dementia, nerve damage, vision loss, hearing impairment, erectile dysfunction, chronic kidney disease, and many other debilitating or life-threatening conditions.

4. SEVENTY PERCENT OF HEART ATTACKS HAVE THE SAME ROOT CASE AS TYPE 2 DIABETES.

It's very common for people to be diagnosed with prediabetes or diabetes shortly after they've suffered a cardiovascular event. In one large study of people treated in the ER for a heart attack, 20 percent were known diabetics. When the other patients were given blood tests, 66 percent had abnormal blood sugar levels that met diagnostic criteria for prediabetes or diabetes. Patients often chalk this double whammy up to bad luck, believing they have been hit with two unrelated diseases at once. Actually, most heart attacks and nearly all cases of type 2 diabetes have the same root cause: insulin resistance (IR), an inflammatory disorder that causes a cascade of dangerous events at the cellular level, damaging all of the body's arteries. To learn more about how type 2 diabetics can reduce their heart attack risk, [click here](#).

5. MORE THAN ONE IN THREE AMERICANS — 88 MILLION ADULTS — HAVE PREDIABETES, ENDANGERING THEIR HEART, BRAIN AND ARTERIAL HEALTH.

Of this group, 85 percent are unaware of their disorder, according to the CDC. Although most people think of prediabetes as the beginning of a long, slow march to type 2 diabetes, it has many other devastating effects. Also known as IR, prediabetes can often progress silently for decades if it goes untreated. For that entire time, the brain is suffering. IR's inflammatory effects have recently been shown to drive the development of Alzheimer's disease (AD), which is so closely linked to IR that some scientists think AD should be renamed type 3 diabetes. Indeed, a recent study reported that 80 percent of people with AD also have IR. Once this prediabetic condition is detected and treated, however, it can often be reversed with simple lifestyle changes, such as [weight loss](#), increasing [physical activity](#) and eating a [healthy diet based on your DNA](#).

6. IN THE TIME IT TAKES TO WATCH A MOVIE, YOU CAN GET THE BEST SCREENING TEST FOR DIABETES — AND MOST INSURANCE PLANS COVER IT.

New guidelines issued earlier this year by

the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force advise that screening start at age 35 if you're overweight or obese, or at a younger age if advised by your provider due to such factors as obesity or family history. The ADA rates the 2-hour oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT), in which you drink a sugary liquid after an overnight fast, as the "gold standard" in accuracy. Blood is drawn at the one- and two-hour marks to check glucose levels. Studies show that other widely used screening tests, such as the A1c test, which doesn't require fasting, are much less accurate. For example, a BaleDoneen study found that of 547 patients checked with various blood sugar tests, the A1C test missed 63 percent of those with IR/prediabetes. Moreover, 27 percent of the patients classified as prediabetic by the A1C actually had normal blood sugar when checked with the highly accurate OGTT.

7. THERE ARE NEW GUIDELINES ABOUT WHEN DIABETES SCREENING SHOULD START.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force [issued new guidelines](#) recommending that people who are overweight should begin screening for diabetes and prediabetes at age 35, 5 years younger than its previous recommendations. The task force advises screening at an earlier age for people

• *November Recipe* •

Shaved Brussels Sprouts and Pomegranate Salad

Perfect for a holiday dinner or festive family meal, this colorful vegan salad abounds in vibrant flavors and heart-healthy nutrients. Called “the jewels of autumn,” pomegranates are rich in disease-fighting antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. Studies have linked consuming this tangy fruit to lower blood pressure, reduced inflammation and improved arterial wellness. Brussels sprouts are an excellent source of dietary fiber and plant protein. In a recent study, people who ate them regularly had a significantly reduced risk for type 2 diabetes.

Pro tip: To deseed the pomegranate, use this quick, no-mess technique: Wash the fruit, then roll to loosen the seeds. Using a sharp knife, score the skin in quarters from top to bottom, being careful not to cut through to the seeds. Submerge in a bowl of water and pry the quarters apart, then use your fingers to gently release the seeds. The skin and pith will float and the seeds will sink. Skim off pith and skin, then drain the seeds.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 1 cup pomegranate seeds
- 1 large red apple
- 1 shallot
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon honey or maple syrup (optional)
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Adapted from acoupleofcooks.com and loveandlemons.com

PREPARATION

Thinly slice Brussels sprouts crosswise with a mandoline or sharp knife. Core apple and slice into bite-sized pieces. Slice shallot into thin rings. In a small bowl, whisk together mustard, lemon juice, honey or maple syrup (if using) and pepper. Gradually whisk in olive oil, one tablespoon at a time, until dressing is thick and emulsified. If it's too tart, add a little more olive oil to taste. In a large salad bowl, combine all ingredients together, toss and enjoy!

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from racial or ethnic groups with disproportionately high rates of diabetes (such as Black, Native American, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian-American and Pacific Islander patients), as well as those with a family history of diabetes or a personal history of gestational diabetes or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Some medical groups call for screening to begin at age 30 — or at a younger age for people at higher risk. Because IR has been shown to start damaging arteries as soon as a person becomes insulin resistant, the BaleDoneen Method recommends that all adults start screening at age 25, using the highly accurate 2-hour oral glucose tolerance test discussed above.

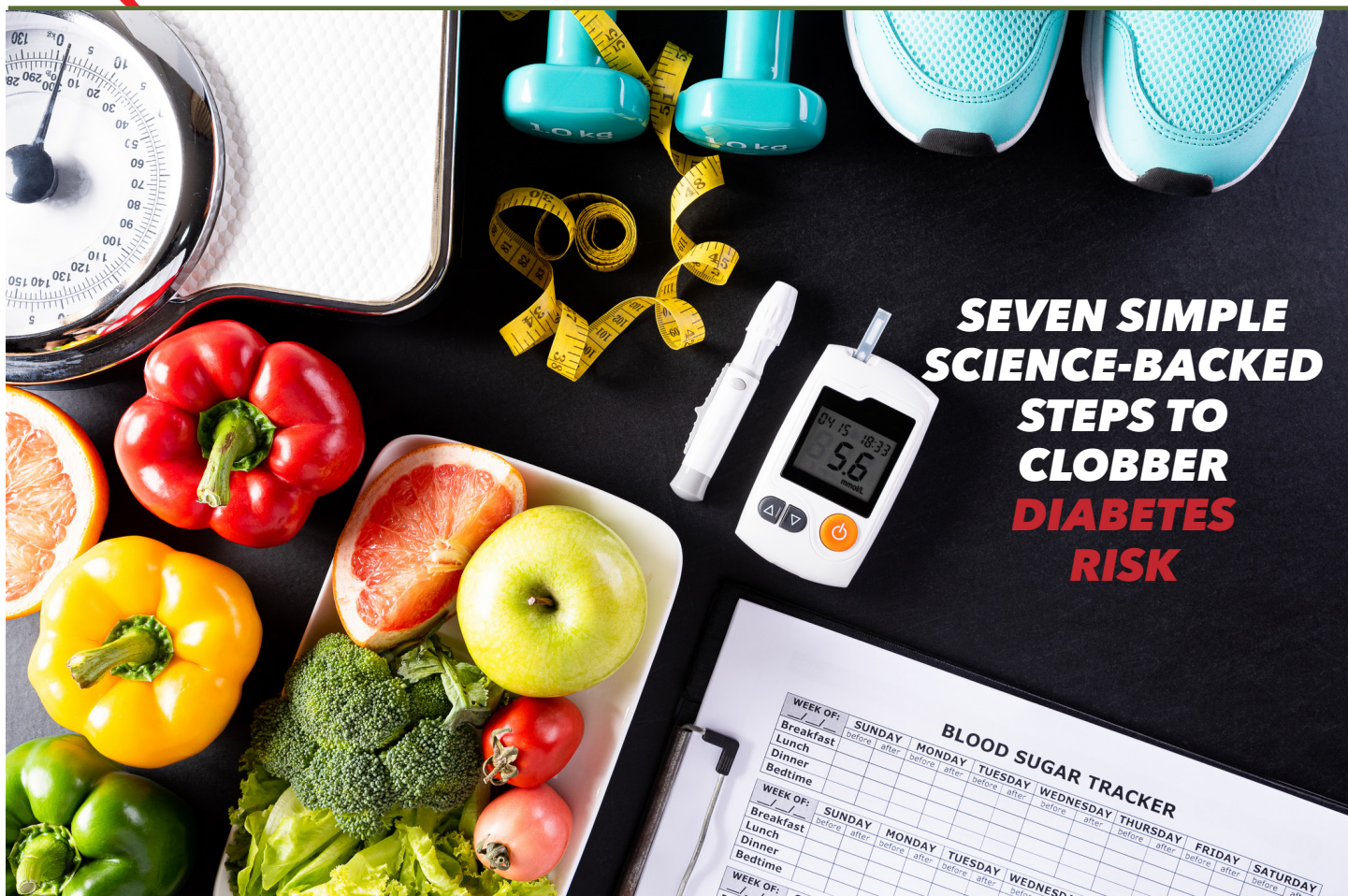
8. SOME PEOPLE WITH “NORMAL” BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS ARE ACTUALLY IN THE EARLY STAGES OF INSULIN RESISTANCE.

Historically, the ADA has defined an OGTT two-hour sugar level of less than 140 mg/dL as normal, a level of 140 to 200 mg/dL as marking prediabetes and a level above 200 mg/dL as diagnostic of diabetes. Recent research by one of the world's top diabetes experts, Dr. Ralph DeFronzo, however, suggests that danger zone for IR starts when two-hour blood sugar reaches 120 mg/dL or higher, a point at which 60 percent of the beta cells are exhausted. When 90 percent of the cells are fatigued (a situation also known as beta cell function loss), you are diabetic. Dr. DeFronzo has also published excellent data in peer-reviewed journals showing that if one-hour blood sugar results exceed 125 mg/dL, the patient should be considered prediabetic.

9. IF YOU'RE DIABETIC, CONTINUOUS GLUCOSE MONITORING CAN IMPROVE

BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL.

A continuous glucose monitor (CGM) automatically tracks your blood sugar 24 hours a day, allowing you to check levels at a glance and observe trends that can help you improve the management of your diabetes. For example, some of our patients have discovered that certain foods they had considered healthy caused their blood sugar to spike, helping them make more informed dietary choices. These FDA-approved devices can also help you better understand how your body responds to physical activity and medications and get a more complete picture of your diabetes. They also sound an alarm if your glucose drops to a dangerously low level and alert you if it rises above a preset threshold. There are several types of CGMs, which are available by prescription. Discuss your options with your healthcare provider.



**SEVEN SIMPLE
SCIENCE-BACKED
STEPS TO
CLOBBER
DIABETES
RISK**

A new study has confirmed one of the key concepts of the BaleDoneen Method: Not only does optimizing your cardiovascular wellness help you avoid heart attacks and strokes, but as an added benefit, it can also prevent type 2 diabetes. The researchers tracked nearly 6,000 people who were initially free of diabetes for up to 27 years and found that those who had heart-healthy habits during middle age had the lowest lifetime risk for developing the blood-sugar disease.

The study, which was published in *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology* in October, also reported that even in people who were at high genetic risk for diabetes, following an ideal cardiovascular lifestyle reduced the likelihood of developing it by near 60 percent. But what, exactly, are the most effective lifestyle measures to keep diabetes at bay? Here are seven proven steps to slash your risk by up to 85 percent — even if you are already prediabetic.

1. Lose a few pounds. Being overweight or obese is the leading risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

A recent study of more than 3,000 prediabetic patients reported that a modest drop in body weight — as little as 3

percent — trimmed the risk of progressing to full-blown diabetes by 38 percent, and a weight drop of 10 percent reduced it by 85 percent. What's more, the researchers reported that the effects of weight loss, achieved through a healthy diet and exercise, were superior to those of medication for the prevention of type 2 diabetes and its many dangerous complications, such as heart attacks, strokes, dementia, vision loss, chronic kidney disease and a long list of other devastating conditions.

2. Battle belly fat and keep diabetes at bay with interval training.

A large waistline (above 40 inches for a man and above 35 inches for a woman) doubles risk for heart disease and more

than triples it for diabetes. If you have insulin resistance (the root cause of 70 percent of heart attacks and almost all cases of type 2 diabetes) or metabolic syndrome, the best way to combat these problems is interval training, in which you alternate short bursts of intense activity with intervals of lighter activity. In a study of overweight people, this type of workout resulted in weight loss, a slimmer waistline, lower blood sugar and improved insulin signaling. The BaleDoneen Method and the American Heart Association advise at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (such as brisk walking, biking, jogging or swimming) at least five days a week, plus strength training at least twice a week. Consult your provider before starting a new workout to make sure it's right for you.



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3. Dial down inflammation and torch body fat with intermittent fasting.

Most people think of intermittent fasting (IF) as a weight-loss plan because it helps your body burn fat. However, [a recent analysis of the science of IF published in *New England Journal of Medicine*](#) found that it has many other benefits, including revving up your metabolism, lowering blood sugar, decreasing belly fat and reducing chronic inflammation — effects that cut your risk for a wide range of health problems, including obesity, dementia and cancer. As we recently reported, IF also helps reduce or even reverse insulin resistance and may add years to your life. There are a few variations of this eating plan, with the most common being the 16/8 approach, which involves fasting for 16 hours a day and limiting your daily eating to 8 hours. During that time, you can have three small meals or two slightly bigger ones. It's crucial to focus on healthy foods in moderate portions.

4. Partner with your dental provider to upgrade your oral health.

About half of adults ages 30 and older have periodontal disease (PD), a chronic oral infection that can lead to tooth loss.

Also known as “gum disease,” PD has been shown to [raise blood sugar levels](#) and is linked to increased risk for developing the type 2 form of the disease. Here's more motivation to take great care of your teeth and gums: A landmark, [peer-reviewed](#) BaleDoneen study was the first to identify oral bacteria from PD as a contributing cause of cardiovascular disease, the leading killer of American men and women. Check out [our easy, four-step plan to optimize your oral health](#).

5. Stress less.

Having a moderate-to-high level of stress more than doubles risk for developing type 2 diabetes three years later, according to [a 2017 study of more than 12,000 middle-aged women](#). The researchers theorize that by repeatedly activating the body's “fight-or-flight” response, chronic tension may increase levels of inflammatory compounds and impair the metabolism of glucose. One of the best ways to tame tension is mindfulness, which has been shown to have [powerful cardiovascular benefits](#). In people who already have diabetes, small [studies suggest](#) that mindfulness can lead to improvements in body weight, blood sugar control and blood pressure and may also enhance psychological well-being.

6. Control your blood pressure.

In a seven-year study of more than 4 million initially healthy people whose average age was 46, those with high blood pressure were 77 percent more likely to develop diabetes. Nearly half of U.S. adults (46 percent) — many of whom are undiagnosed — are considered to have high blood pressure [under recently updated guidelines](#). If your blood pressure is 120/80 mmHg or higher, talk to your provider about how to reduce it. Treatments include lifestyle changes, and in many cases, medication.

7. Sleep well.

Many studies have shown that people who sleep seven to eight hours a night have the lowest risk for type 2 diabetes, while slumbering for five or fewer hours — or more than nine — raises risk for the disease by up to 52 percent. Chronically skimping on slumber is linked to reduced production of insulin, a hormone that regulates blood sugar, and also [increases risk for cardiovascular disease](#), obesity, depression and other chronic disorders. To make sure you get the restorative rest you need for optimal health, try our five natural ways to [sleep better](#).