

Prediabetes, Diabetes, and Heart Health Lifestyle Guide

Welcome to the Soulful South Prediabetes, Diabetes, and Heart Health lifestyle guide. Our goal is simple. We want to make it easy for you to take charge of your health. Basically, we want to help you balance your lifestyle. Everything found in this guide is proven to reduce your risks of heart disease and diabetes or prevent it from becoming worse. It is also proven to lower your weight and help you manage sodium. This free guide is a combination of the [Diabetes Prevention Program](#) and the [Mediterranean Diet](#) . To get the most results you have to follow the advice to the letter. Each chapter has plenty of great advice for avoiding food high in unhealthy fat, staying active, and managing stress.

Read the following chapters in this guide to learn how to control your health!



Chapter 1: Balance Your Lifestyle

To balance your lifestyle this guide will help you:

- Learn the facts about healthy eating and being active.
- Learn what makes it hard for you to eat healthy and be active.
- Find the time to be active.
- Ask for what you want when you eat out.
- And stop negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones. As well as many other useful advice.

The two most important goals are:

1. To lose 1-2 pounds per week through healthy eating.
2. Do 2 ½ hours of brisk, physical activity each week. Take a brisk walk for 30 minutes on five days of the week.

These goals have a ton of benefits. They will help you prevent diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and heart disease. And, perhaps more importantly, they will help give you more energy. You'll also be able to relax and sleep better.

We will help you reach these goals by making gradual, healthy, and reasonable changes in your diet and activity. We recommend reading one to two sessions a week. This will allow you time to properly digest the information. And it will allow you to determine how you can make the changes needed to improve your health. Ready to balance your lifestyle? Let's get started.

Chapter 2: How to Be Active

Do you remember our major goals? **One of them is to do 2 ½ hours of physical activity each week. This will help you burn about 700 calories per week.** I know that this may seem like a lot of activity, but it's very doable. You'll be glad that you did!

The keys to being active are:

- To pick activities you LIKE
- Choose moderate kinds of activity, like brisk walking
- Work up to this goal slowly. Start by trying to do 1 hour of exercise a week. Add 30 minutes each week, until you build up to the 2 ½ hours.
- Spread the weekly total over 3 to 5 days per week.

How active are you right now? What activities did you do in the past? Why did you stop? Do you know how to be active?



These are important questions that you should ask yourself when trying to be more active. Seriously think about what you like about being active and what you like about being inactive. Think about what is stopping you from being active. And think about all of the great things you gain by being active. This could be spending more time with your family, living longer, having enough energy to leave the house, or anything else that you can think of.

One of the most important things to have when learning how to be active is a good pair of shoes. The right pair of shoes go a long way towards making it easier for you to be active. If you don't have a good pair of shoes, you should try make that investment. They don't have to be super expensive. They just have to fit great and support your feet and ankles.

Now that you know the basics of being active, you have to learn how to stay active.

Three keys to staying active are to:

1. Set aside one block of time every day to be active. Find a time that you can set aside 20 to 30 minutes each day.
2. Look for free time (10 to 15 minutes) during the day. Use the time to be active.
3. Make active choices like parking your car far away from your destination or walking up stairs.
4. Turn inactive time into active time. Try cutting your TV time in half and walk instead. Or you can be active while you watch TV.

Prevent sore muscles or cramps

- Only increase a little at a time how often, how hard, and how long you're active.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after being active.
- Wear socks that fit well, are comfortable, and keep your feet dry.
- Warm-up before and cool-down after every activity. A few minutes of stretching is included in this warm-up and cool-down.

Chapter 3: How to Eat Healthy

Being active is great for keeping the same weight. But it is not a good method for losing weight by itself. It takes a lot of exercise to burn off the calories needed to lose weight. The best method for losing weight is to exercise and eat healthy. If you combine these things, your chance for success is much greater. We have already covered how to be active, so now let's jump into how to eat healthy.

To start. Weighing and measuring food is important.

- Use a metal or plastic measuring cup or spoon for solid foods. Fill it. Then level it off.
- Use liquid measuring cups for liquids. Read the line at eye level.
- Use a scale for meats, cheeses, etc. Weigh meats after they are cooked. Remember that 4 oz. raw = 3 oz.



cooked. If you don't have a scale, try to estimate based on how much the package said initially. If you have a pound of meat and split it evenly into 4, then you have 1/4 pound each or 4 ounces.

You'd be surprised at how much your eyes can play tricks on you. That is why it is important to weigh and measure foods.

Now let's focus on how to eat less healthy by eating less fat.

This is especially important for people who are obese, diabetic, pre-diabetic, or have hypertension or heart conditions.

1. Eat foods high in unhealthy fat foods less often. If you're following the Mediterranean Diet, remember to eat 2 to 4 servings of healthy fat a day. Don't go over that or you could find yourself gaining weight.
2. Eat lower-fat foods. Instead of potato chips, eat pretzels. Instead of butter or regular margarine, try low-fat margarine. Instead of chicken breasts, with skin, and fried try roasted or grilled chicken breasts with skin.
3. Eat at least 7 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
4. Eat up to 2 servings (6 ounces) of lean meat per day.
5. Eat at least 3 servings of whole grain per day.
6. Avoid sugar-sweetened drinks, store bought desserts and sweets, and fast food. If you fry food, use peanut or vegetable oil.
7. Check out [this link](#) to learn more about the Mediterranean Diet.

Avoiding unhealthy fat isn't the only way to eat better. To learn how to eat healthy also requires you to monitor sodium. This is really important if you have hypertension.

1. Avoid adding too much salt to meals. Try to limit salt you add to meals to 1/8 tsp per meal.
2. Try to avoid processed foods with lots of salt. Tortillas, canned vegetables, and some breads have a ton of hidden salt.
3. Eat vegetables that taste good naturally. This will stop you from adding salt unnecessarily.

Finally, it is important to remember that how you eat makes a huge difference in your health. This is important for everyone!

1. A regular pattern of meals is important. This will stop you from getting too hungry and losing control.
2. Eat slowly. This will allow you to digest your food better. Be more aware of what you are eating. And be more aware of when you are full.
3. Don't worry about cleaning your plate. Serve yourself smaller portions to begin with.
4. And finally. Eat a variety of foods. Try to get all of your grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy, beans, and meats. And avoid fats, sweets, and alcohol!



Chapter 4: Best Ways to Lose Weight

I blame sweet tea for the high rates of obesity in the South. Just kidding. To be honest, there are a lot of factors that go into obesity beyond diet and exercise. You might ask, “If that is true, then why do we care so much about dieting and exercising? Why don’t we focus on the other issues?” The truth is that many of the other factors are still being explored and their roles are uncertain. Diet and exercise are things that we can control. Most of us can decide to eat an apple for a snack or go for a walk. The reasons we don’t depends on the person. Perhaps we’re too comfortable on the couch or we had a stressful day. Despite this, we must overcome our own selves to live healthier, happier lives.

Think of all of the times in the last week that you ate a high fat snack? What could you have eaten instead?

As of 2013, the American Heart Association began treating obesity as a disease. This is because obesity increases the risk of getting heart disease and stroke, the nation’s number 1 and number 5 killers. By losing weight, it is possible to decrease your chances of getting heart disease and stroke.

There are a lot of diets out there claiming that they will help you lose weight, but the truth is the diet you choose isn’t as important as following these three rules.

1. Eat fewer calories that your body needs
2. Exercise more
3. Change unhealthy behaviors like smoking and drinking alcohol

If we eat the bare minimum amount of calories that our bodies need to function, then we stay at the same weight. If we eat more calories than we need, then we gain weight. And if we eat less calories than we need, then we lose weight. **So to lose weight you have to eat less calories or you have to burn more calories.** Sounds simple enough, right? If you choose to cut calories, start by reducing the amount of calories you need to eat by 500, to slowly lose weight. **DO NOT TRY TO LOSE MORE THAN 2 POUNDS PER WEEK.** Any more weight loss than this can be unsafe and unhealthy. You may lose water, muscle, and protein. If you find yourself losing too much weight, increase your calories. And please don’t weigh yourself daily, weekly measurements are better indicators of your weight and will stress you out a lot less.

If you want to know the exact amount of calories you need to eat, check out this [link](#). Then click on the “Body Weight Planner.” This will bring you to a calorie calculator by the National Institute of Health. It’s very easy to use. Make sure you plug realistic goals into the calculator though.

You might be wondering how you would survive if you ate less calories a day than your body needs. Your body turns the fat it stores into energy for your body. **You might feel a little hungry at first, but the hunger will stop when the fat is turned into energy. Remember, even though this sounds simple. These are the best ways to lose weight.**



Chapter 5: Mediterranean Diet

Diets have a reputation for being fads. Every year a new diet comes that claims to cause miracle weight loss or muscle gain. Whether or not these claims are true is rarely tested. And the evidence usually does not exist. Because of this I can only advocate for two diets in good faith. The first diet is the **DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Eating Plan**. This diet is effective, but hard to tailor to Southern cuisine. The second diet is the **Mediterranean Diet**. This is the diet SoulfulSouth is built upon because it is very versatile, proven, and easy to use.

What is the Mediterranean Diet?

The Mediterranean Diet is a diet proven to lower weight. It also decreases your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. It isn't a diet that has you cutting out fats or starches. Instead, it tries to balance these nutrition types. This is important because eating a variety of foods is the best way to get everything your body needs. You get all of your vitamins, minerals, calories, and proteins. And, if you reduce your salt intake, you can lower your blood pressure even more. The hardest part is reducing unhealthy fat and sugar.

If you have looked at the recipes, you are probably wondering. "What type of diet is this?" Or "Will this actually work? It looks too good to be true." Well, it will work. You just have to commit to following it. This diet is proven to lower weight and lower your chances of heart disease or diabetes. If you reduce your salt intake, you can even lower your blood pressure. This is an alternative diet to the Mediterranean diet.

This diet focuses on fat quality instead of fat amount. You may have noticed that when you eat food high in fat you stay full longer. This diet utilizes this idea. But instead of eating any fats, you have to eat healthy fats. This includes vegetable oils, nuts, and fish. In addition, you have to commit to increasing your fruits and vegetables and eating mainly whole grains. Now let's play a game of "Great, Ok, and No No" to show you how this works.

Great Choices! These are your best friends. Do whatever you can to keep this list close. This list is the reason you don't have to count calories.

- Eat 7 or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat beans and peas 3 times per week.
- Eat 2 to 3 servings of low-fat dairy per week.
- Eat 3 or more servings of whole grain food per day. This includes whole grain breads, brown rice, barley, and whole grain pastas.
- Eat 2 to 4 servings each day of foods that are high in healthy fats. Include nuts, fish, healthy salad dressing, regular mayonnaise, and avocado. Healthy fats are, generally, liquid at room temperature.
- Eat 3 or more servings of poultry each week. Even the fattier parts of the chicken are good fats, so you can eat the whole chicken.
- Eat fish 1-2 times per week with little mercury.



- Examples) canned light tuna, catfish, shrimp, salmon, trout, anchovies.

Ok. These foods are alright to eat. Try to stick to the great options whenever possible. But if you have a craving for something else, you can give these a shot.

- It is ok to eat 4 to 7 eggs per week. Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables are ideal for breakfast.
- Chicken skin is ok to eat. But be careful that you are not frying it and eating it with mac and cheese and bacon grease flavored collards. Eating this much fat is way more than recommended.
- Cut down on beef or pork high in saturated fats. Aim to eat 5 servings or less per week. Try lean cuts. round, sirloin, or loin cuts of beef or trimmed pork chops)
- Desserts and sweets that you make yourself. Limit these to one or two times per week.
- Cut down on bacon and sausage. Aim for once a week or less.

No Nos. These are foods that you should avoid at all costs.

- Avoid packaged snack and bakery foods.
- Avoid white flour, white rice, and regular pasta. I know this might be difficult, but whole grain products have more vitamins, minerals and fiber. They take longer to cook, so I recommend making a huge batch of brown rice once a week. You can then reheat it whenever you need it.
- Avoid food high in saturated fats including fatty meats, processed meats, ice cream, whole milk, and butter.
- Avoid store bought desserts and sweets. They are loaded with trans fats and saturate fats.
- Avoid sodas and other sugary drinks.
- Avoid salt.
- Avoid “supersized” food and drink portions.
- Avoid eating more than 4 servings of fat a day. Fats are high in calories, so you could find yourself putting on more weight.

Chapter 6: Healthy Fats

The thing that sets the Mediterranean Diet apart from other diets is the focus on healthy fats. You should eat foods with lots of good fats each day. This is because foods high in fat are more filling than other foods. This will stop you from binge eating when you get hungry. Eating too much healthy fat can cause you to add weight as well. So the goal is to eat 2 to 4 servings of foods high in healthy fats a day.

Eating 2 to 4 servings of fats gives you a lot of choices for how you want to eat. Let’s breakdown some of your options for eating this healthy fat.



1. Let's say that you aren't a fan of meats or fried foods. You could get a serving of healthy fat from a handful of nuts. You could eat a salad with 1 to 2 tablespoons of healthy salad dressing. You could eat a quarter of an avocado. Or you could saute a variety of vegetables using one tablespoon of olive oil.
2. Let's say you really love fried foods. A serving of fried shrimp (3 ounces) would give you 2 servings of healthy fat, if you fried it with canola or peanut oil. You would get one serving of healthy fat from the shrimp. And one serving of healthy fat from the frying.
3. What if you struggle to eat a healthy lunch each day? You could make a turkey and cheese sandwich and add 1 tablespoon of mayonnaise. Remember to use whole-grain bread.
4. If you're always hungry before lunch, try adding 1 or two servings of your healthy fat to breakfast. You could add almonds to your cereal or oatmeal. You could also toast bread and add a tablespoon of trans-fat free margarine spread.

That's just a few examples. This diet offers a ton of flexibility. It lets you to choose how you want to tackle your day. You just have to think about what you need. If you get hungry throughout the day, then you should be using your healthy fat servings evenly on every meal. You could eat 1 serving of healthy fat food for breakfast and lunch and two servings for dinner. If you are trying to lose weight and find that you don't have much of an appetite, you can aim for two servings of healthy fat foods a day.

Chapter 7: Take Charge of Your Surroundings

Ok. So we've covered being active and eating healthy. Now you have to learn how to take charge of your surroundings. To do this you must first know yourself. What makes you want to eat? Sure, you may eat when you feel hungry, but is there anything else that cues you to eat? What about thoughts or feelings? Or what about things other people say and do? You might even be triggered by the sight or smell of food or watching TV or reading magazines.

For example, you might see a carton of ice cream and want to eat it. Or you might turn on your TV and want potato chips. When you respond to a food cue in the same way, on a regular basis, you create a habit.

Change your cues by:

1. Staying away from the cue. Keep it out of sight or out of your house. For example, you can hide bags of potato chips on the highest shelves that you are less likely to see. Or not buy them when you go to the store.
2. Build a new, healthier habit. Add positive cues to your life. Keep things with healthy associations in plain view. You can place a bowl of fruit on the table, keep a bike or running shoes out in the open, or even have little reminders posted.
3. Get rid of cues for being inactive. You can limit tv watching. If that's too hard, you can be active while watching tv. Try tread milling, exercising, or stretching while watching.



Now, you should think very carefully about what you can do to change your bad habits. Look around your house for negative cues. Then look for solutions to change these negative cues to being positive cues. If you can't change the cue, find a place to hide it.

What if you're eating out? How do you take charge of that environment? These four tips will help you avoid the pitfalls of eating out.

1. Plan ahead. Call ahead to ask about low-fat choices or look at low-fat options on the menu online. Eat a little something before you go to lower your appetite. When you get there, don't look at the menu. Order what you planned earlier. And finally, don't drink alcohol before eating.
2. Ask for what you want. Be firm, but friendly. Ask for what you want and how much you want. Don't allow servers or chefs to add unhealthy add-ons to your food. And if you receive the wrong order, in a friendly manner state the problem and ask for the order to be corrected.
3. Take charge of your surroundings! Be the first to order. Keep food off the table that you don't want to eat. Ask that your plate be removed as soon as you finish.
4. Choose foods carefully. Menu items that mention hollandaise, parmesan, au gratin, breaded, cheese sauce, or rich are very fatty. Look for baked, broiled, boiled, grilled, poached, roasted, steamed, or stir-fried. And watch out for sauces! They pack a ton of fat and calories.

Chapter 8: What to Do When You Slip

Let's be honest here. We all slip up on our diets. It's impossible to be perfect 100% of the time. You might give in to the chocolate cake you see at the restaurant. Or you might be super stressed and just want some fried chicken. Maybe you're too comfortable on the couch to go for a walk today. Just remember that the slip isn't the problem. The problem only occurs if you're not able to get back up from falling.

Here are some tips for you if you slip:

1. Talk back to negative thoughts with positive thoughts. Negative thoughts can be your worst enemy. Talk back. Yell if you have to. Shout, "I'm not a failure because I've slipped. I can get back up."
2. Ask yourself what went wrong. Learn from your slip, so you can avoid it in the future.
3. Regain control the very next time you can. Don't tell yourself you've failed for the day. Make sure the very next meal is healthy. Or the very next snack is a fruit.
4. Talk to someone supportive. Call your family or friends who are there for you. Commit yourself to renewed effort.
5. Focus on all of the positive changes you've made. Think about all the time you spent reading these articles. All of the dietary changes you've made. All of the weight you've lost so far.

Sometimes our slips become a pattern. If this happens, think about what caused the problem. For instance, let's say that you've started eating cookies every afternoon. *What caused this sudden change that has become daily?*



Ok, so you saw the cookies on the counter, so you went for them? What about before that. What caused you to go for the cookies? You came home tired, upset, and hungry? There are a few questions that I have now, but I'll start with. Why were you upset and tired? Your boss was very critical and stressed you out. You also skipped lunch because you were very rushed and busy.

There we have it. So there are a few ways we can fix this problem. The first is that you can pack a quick bag lunch for days you can't eat a set lunch. You can talk with your boss about your stress, take a break when you're stressed, or talk to a co-worker for support. When you get home, you can go for a walk to unwind. And finally, you can hide the cookies out of sight or not buy cookies. And keep fruit in sight.

Think about what you can do to stay on track after you slip. **What will you do when you slip? If slips become habit, how will you change them?**

Chapter 9: How to Manage Stress

On the journey to getting back your health, you're going to face a lot of tough situations. If you haven't already, you will feel stressed. You'll feel tired. And you'll wonder why you tried to start a healthy lifestyle. Take a few minutes to reflect on your own life. I want you to think about all of the times you've been stressed. *What did it feel like? Did you think about giving up?*

As simple as this sounds, there are only two ways to manage stress. You can avoid it. Or you can deal with it once you feel it. I'm going to start by giving you some pointers on how to prevent stress. Then give you some tips on how to manage it, if you can't avoid it.

There are a number of ways to prevent stress. Some of them are:

- Practice saying "no." Only say "yes" when it is something that is important to you.
- Share some of your work with others. Health is a team effort. Never take on more than you can chew in your social life or at work.
- Set goals you can reach. Nothing feels better than reaching a goal. And nothing feels worse than failing. Start slow, so that you can build up.
- Control your time. Make schedules and get organized.
- Brainstorm options to avoid difficult problems. Then make a plan for what you will do to avoid stress.
- Plan ahead. Think about situations before they happen. What will you do to prevent or work around it?
- Keep things in perspective. Think of all of the good things in your life. Remember why you decided to live healthier.
- Reach out to people. Find someone who can give you a shoulder to cry on. Talking helps.
- Be physically active. Moving your body will help you forget the world. And your problems.



If you can't avoid stress, you have to find a way to manage it. Admittedly, there isn't much you can do at this point. But these 3 tips work wonders.

- Move your muscles. Get loose. Get active.
- Pamper yourself. You deserve it. Take 10 minutes for yourself. Relax.
- Take a full, deep breath. Count to five. Then let go of your breath slowly. Let the muscles in your face, arms, legs, and body go completely loose.

Chapter 10: Quitting Smoking

Smoking leads to a variety of diseases and conditions. To be honest, if I listed them all you would get bored. I'll stick to the big ones. Smoking leads to cancer, heart disease, hypertension, and kidney disease just to name a few. Quitting can be a challenge, but you will find that it is worth it. Your energy will increase by stopping. You will have less hospital visits. And you will look and feel healthier. Here are some tips to help you quit smoking today.

1. Make lifestyle changes to reduce stress and control your weight. You can start an exercise program and eat healthier. Don't forget to enlist the help of friends, family, or a support group. Having support will go a long way towards helping you maintain these lifestyle changes.
2. Make a plan to help you quit smoking. Talk with a physician to learn how to manage symptoms of withdrawal. Your physician can prescribe you medication to cope with these symptoms as well.
3. Seek out places and people that support your choices. Go to places where people can't smoke. You can even plan social events, so you control the location. If someone you know smokes, make the decision to avoid them when they are smoking to avoid temptation.
4. Find help to quit smoking. Friends and family can be your support. But there are other support options as well. Call a Quitline to speak with a trained professional or try an online program. Call this National Cancer Institute number for free coaching to stop smoking, 1-877-448-7848. Go to becomeanex.org for online resources to quit sponsored by the National Alliance for Tobacco Cessation.
5. Call or go to the website of your insurance company or benefit plan to learn if they will help cover the cost of quitting. They might be able to pay for nicotine patches or medication that will help you quit.
6. If you don't have insurance or a benefit plan, sign up for a \$4 Prescription Program. Walmart and target both have these options. They allow you to buy a 30 day supply of approved generic medicine for \$4.

You've come this far. Let's move on to the final chapter, [Chapter 9: Stay Motivated to be Healthy!](#)

Chapter 11: Stay Motivated to Be Healthy

By now you have all of the tools you need to stay healthy. You've learned how to eat better, how to be active, and how to manage stress. You only have one thing left to learn. And that is how to stay motivated to be



healthy. This can be a very tricky thing for people. Some people will lose an amazing amount of weight. Then gain it all because they lost their motivation.

These tips will help you to avoid losing motivation!

1. Stay aware of the health benefits you've achieved and hope to achieve. What have you achieved since first trying to be healthy? Have you reached your goals? What do you want to accomplish in the next six months?
2. Recognize your successes. You've achieved a lot. You just need to keep reminding yourself of how amazing you are. What changes in your eating do you feel proudest of? What about changes in your activity?
3. Keep visible signs of your progress. Post weight and activity milestones on your refrigerator. Measure yourself once a month. You could even make a note of all of the compliments that you've gotten since you started.
4. Keep track of your weight, eating, and activity. Record your activity daily. Record what you eat. And record your weight.
5. Add variety to your routine. Ride your bike or go swimming. Try a new recipe from this site. There are plenty of things you can do to spice it up. Don't let yourself become bored.
6. Set new goals. Find ways to reward yourself when you the goals. The goal should be attainable, but not easy. And the reward should be something that you can do or but if you reach it. What are some non-food ways you can reward yourself?
7. Create some friendly competition. Challenge your friend to see who can walk the most in a week. Or who can lose the most weight in 6 months. Set up the kind of competition that you both will win.

Now you have everything you to be healthy. And you know how to stay motivated to be healthy. The only thing left for you is to keep pushing to change your life and take back your health.

Congratulations! You have completed the Prediabetes, Diabetes, and Heart Health Lifestyle Guide!

