

## Sleep duration linked to blood vessel damage in Diabetes

STAR HEALTH REPORT

If you have recently been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, paying attention to your sleep habits might be more important than you think. A recent study published in The Lancet reveals that both too little and too much sleep can increase the risk of developing serious complications related to diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is already a challenging condition, but it becomes even more problematic when it leads to microvascular disease—damage to the small blood vessels. This can result in complications such as retinopathy (eye damage) and nephropathy (kidney damage). Now, research from Denmark has shown that your sleep duration plays a significant role in this risk.

In a study involving nearly 400 people newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, participants' sleep was tracked using wearable devices for 10 days. The findings were clear: those who slept less than 7 hours or more than 9 hours per night were at a higher risk of microvascular damage compared to those who had an optimal sleep duration of 7 to 9 hours.

Specifically, short sleepers had a 2.6 times higher risk of microvascular disease, while long sleepers had a 2.3 times higher risk. Age further amplified these risks. For people aged 62 and older, short sleep was associated with a 5.7 times higher risk of small blood vessel damage.

The takeaway? Maintaining a healthy sleep schedule is crucial for managing type 2 diabetes and preventing further complications. While lifestyle changes for diabetes often focus on diet and exercise, ensuring you get an optimal amount of sleep should also be a priority. This simple change can make a big difference in your overall health and well-being.



STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends a comprehensive set of tobacco cessation, including behavioural support delivered by healthcare providers, digital cessation interventions, and pharmacological treatments, in a first guideline on tobacco cessation.

The guideline focuses on helping the more than 750 million tobacco users who want to quit all forms of tobacco. The recommendations are relevant for all adults seeking to quit various tobacco products, including cigarettes, waterpipes, smokeless tobacco products, cigars, roll-your-own tobacco, and heated tobacco products (HTPs).

"This guideline marks a crucial milestone in our global battle against these dangerous products," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "It empowers countries with the essential tools to effectively support individuals in quitting tobacco and alleviate the global burden of tobacco-related diseases."

Over 60% of the world's 1.25

billion tobacco users—more than 750 million people—wish to quit, yet 70% lack access to effective cessation services. This gap exists due to challenges faced by health systems, including resource limitations.

"The immense struggle that people face when trying to quit smoking cannot be overstated. We need to deeply appreciate the strength it takes and the suffering endured by individuals and their loved ones to overcome this addiction," said Dr Rüdiger Krech, Director of Health Promotion at WHO. "These guidelines are designed to help communities and governments provide the best possible support and assistance for those on this challenging journey."

**Effective therapies for quitting tobacco**

Combining pharmacotherapy with behavioural interventions significantly increases quitting success rates. Countries are encouraged to provide these treatments at no or reduced cost to improve accessibility, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

WHO recommends varenicline,

nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), bupropion, and cytidine as effective treatments for tobacco cessation.

In 2023, WHO initiated a prequalification procedure for medicinal products against disorders caused by tobacco use to improve global access to recommended tobacco cessation medications. In April 2024, Kenvue's nicotine gum and patch became the first WHO-prequalified NRT products.

WHO recommends behavioural interventions, including brief health worker counselling (30 seconds to 3 minutes) offered routinely in healthcare settings, alongside more intensive behavioural support (individual, group, or phone counselling) for interested users. Additionally, digital interventions such as text messaging, smartphone apps, and internet programmes can be used as adjuncts or self-management tools.

WHO encourages health-care providers, policymakers, and stakeholders to adopt and implement this guideline to promote tobacco cessation and improve the health of millions of people in need worldwide.

## UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERY Dry skin vs. eczema

Ever wondered why your skin feels itchy, scaly, or irritated? It could be dry skin or eczema, two conditions that often share similar symptoms but have distinct differences. Dry skin is a common issue exacerbated by factors like weather and harsh soaps, while eczema, a type of dermatitis, involves a faulty skin barrier and immune system response.

**Understanding the symptoms:**

Dry skin tends to feel rough, tight, and may crack, especially in dry climates or after hot showers. On the other hand, eczema manifests as red bumpy patches with blisters that can ooze and crust over, often exacerbated by allergens and stress.

**Practical tips for relief:**

- Opt for shorter, lukewarm showers to prevent moisture loss.
- Immediately moisturise with gentle, fragrance-free creams or ointments.



- Use mild, unscented products to avoid further irritation.
- Consider a humidifier to add moisture to indoor air during dry seasons.

For eczema-specific care, additional treatments like over-the-counter medications and dermatologist-prescribed therapies may be necessary to manage flare-ups effectively.

By understanding the nuances between dry skin and eczema, you can take proactive steps to care for your skin and alleviate discomfort. If symptoms persist or worsen, consulting a healthcare professional is recommended for tailored treatment options.

## How delaying diabetes by four years can improve your long-term health

Prediabetes is a condition where your blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be classified as diabetes. It serves as a crucial warning sign that you might develop type 2 diabetes if you do not take action. Addressing prediabetes promptly through lifestyle changes like diet and exercise can make a significant difference in your health.

Recent findings have highlighted that delaying the onset of diabetes by just four years can drastically reduce the long-term risks of death and diabetes-related complications. These insights come from a study led by Guangwei Li of the China-Japan Friendship Hospital, published on July 9<sup>th</sup> in the open-access journal



PLOS Medicine.

Type 2 diabetes is known to pose significant risks of death and disability, and it results in substantial economic costs for both individuals and societies. However, those diagnosed with prediabetes can reduce their risk of developing diabetes by adopting healthier lifestyles, such as eating a balanced diet and increasing physical activity. But how long do you need to delay diabetes to achieve long-term health benefits?

In this study, researchers analysed the health outcomes of 540 individuals with prediabetes who participated in the Da Qing Diabetes Prevention Study. This trial, which began in 1986 in Da Qing City, China, lasted six years and included a control group and three lifestyle intervention groups focused on diet, exercise, or both. The participants were followed for

over 30 years to evaluate the long-term effects of delaying diabetes.

The research team discovered that participants who remained non-diabetic for at least four years after their initial prediabetes diagnosis had a significantly lower risk of dying and experiencing major cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks, strokes, or heart failure, compared to those who developed diabetes sooner. This protective effect was not observed in those who stayed non-diabetic for less than four years.

Overall, the study suggests that the longer someone with prediabetes can delay the onset of diabetes, the better their long-term

health outcomes will be. Even a few years of delaying diabetes can yield lasting health benefits.

The researchers concluded that maintaining a non-diabetic status for a longer period in individuals with impaired glucose tolerance leads to improved health outcomes and lower mortality rates. They emphasised that effective interventions for people with diabetes should be included in preventive strategies to manage diabetes and its related vascular complications.

By focusing on healthy lifestyle changes, such as eating a nutritious diet and exercising regularly, individuals with prediabetes can improve their chances of living longer and healthier lives. Taking action now can help you avoid severe health issues associated with diabetes and enjoy a better quality of life.



## UNLOCKING YOUR BODY'S POTENTIAL: The power of metabolic conditioning

Heading outdoors for work or study often involves more physical activity than we realise. Whether it is brisk walking to catch a bus or climbing stairs to a meeting, our bodies constantly utilise energy. This process, called metabolism, fuels our movements by converting food into energy units known as adenosine triphosphate (ATP). How efficiently our bodies produce and use ATP during physical activity forms the basis of metabolic conditioning, also known as MetCon.

Metabolic conditioning is not just a fitness trend—it is a structured approach to improving how our

bodies generate energy across different intensities of exercise. From low-intensity activities like walking to high-intensity workouts such as sprinting, each level demands energy from specific pathways in the body. These pathways, influenced by oxygen availability and nutrient sources like carbohydrates and fats, adapt to the intensity and duration of our physical efforts.

The benefits of metabolic conditioning extend beyond the gym. It enhances the body's ability to perform tasks more efficiently in less time, contributing to weight loss, increased muscle mass,

and improved aerobic capacity. Crucially, this form of training continues to burn calories even after the workout ends, making it effective for those looking to shed excess weight.

Workouts designed for metabolic conditioning vary based on fitness levels and goals. Beginners might start with simple routines like Airdyne bicycle sprints, alternating bursts of maximum effort with short rests. For more advanced practitioners, exercises using equipment like TRX suspension trainers challenge muscles further by adjusting body positions or

increasing resistance.

Understanding and implementing metabolic conditioning not only improves physical performance but also promotes overall health. By optimising our body's energy systems through targeted exercises, we enhance our ability to handle everyday activities with greater ease and efficiency. Whether you are aiming to boost endurance, trim down, or simply feel more energised, integrating MetCon into your fitness routine can pave the way to a healthier lifestyle.

## Enjoying the outdoors safely: Summer skin protection tips

As we head outdoors for work, study, or simply to enjoy the sunny days, it is important to keep our skin protected from the summer sun's rays. While sunshine brings joy, it also brings risks to our skin's health.

**Guard against UV rays:**

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can cause sunburns, premature ageing, and increase the risk of skin cancer. Protecting your skin from UV exposure is crucial and entirely preventable.

**Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen:**

Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher to shield against both UVA and UVB rays. Apply about two finger lengths for your face and neck, and a shot glass amount for your body. Reapply every two hours (or every 90 minutes if sweating or in water), and don't forget your ears—even on cloudy days.



**Embrace sun-protective clothing:**

Not all clothing offers sun protection. Look for garments labelled with UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor), ideally UPF 50, to block harmful rays effectively. From stylish

leisurewear to functional athletic gear, UPF clothing provides a fashionable shield.

**Sun-smart practices:**

UV rays peak from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., so seek shade and wear a wide-brimmed hat for added protection. This helps shield your ears, head, and neck better than a baseball cap.

**Skincare tips for summer:**

Hot weather can aggravate skin conditions like acne and eczema. Use gentle cleansers with salicylic acid to unclog pores, avoiding harsh scrubs that can irritate. After swimming, rinse off chlorine to prevent dryness and eczema flare-ups. Moisturise with non-comedogenic products to keep your skin hydrated and healthy.

By following these simple tips, you can enjoy the sun safely while protecting your skin from potential damage.