

Diabetes

IN THE U.S. LATINO COMMUNITY

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT DIABETES

Common Types of Diabetes

- *Type 1*
Approximately 5% to 10% of diagnosed cases of diabetes are Type 1. Type 1 diabetes develops when the body's immune system destroys pancreatic beta cells, the only cells in the body that make insulin. Insulin is the hormone that regulates sugar levels in the blood. Type 1 diabetes is associated with autoimmune, genetic, and environmental risk factors.¹
- *Type 2*
Approximately 90% to 95% of diagnosed cases are Type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes begins as insulin resistance followed by the gradual inability of pancreatic beta cells to produce insulin. Type 2 diabetes is associated with old age, obesity, physical inactivity, race/ethnicity, and a family history of diabetes.²
- *Gestational*
Approximately 4% of women are diagnosed with gestational diabetes during pregnancy. It is a form of sugar intolerance that is usually resolved after pregnancy. During pregnancy, gestational diabetes requires treatment to normalize maternal blood sugar levels in order to avoid complications for the fetus. Risk factors for gestational diabetes are obesity and a family history of diabetes.³

Complications

- Amputation: Diabetes is the leading cause of nontraumatic amputation of the lower limbs.⁴
- Kidney failure: Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, accounting for 44% of new cases in 2005.⁵
- Other complications include high blood pressure, blindness, nervous system disease, dental disease, pregnancy complications, and susceptibility to other illnesses including pneumonia and influenza.⁶
- 24% of diabetes goes undiagnosed.⁷
- Heart failure: Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death listed on U.S. death certificates. About 68 percent of people who die of heart disease have diabetes, making it the leading cause of death among diabetics.⁸

DIABETES: A GROWING EPIDEMIC FOR LATINOS IN THE UNITED STATES

- According to the US Census there are 45.5 million Latinos living in the United States.⁹
- 10.4 percent of Latinos ages 20 or older have been diagnosed with diabetes.¹⁰
- On average, Latinos are 1.9 times more likely to have diabetes than non-Latino whites.¹¹
- Nearly half of Latino children born in the year 2000 are likely to develop diabetes in their lifetime.¹²
- Among Latinos, diabetes rates are 8.2% for Cubans, 11.9% for Mexican Americans and 12.6% for Puerto Ricans.¹³
- Between 1997 and 2005, the prevalence of diabetes increased 16% for Latino men and 21% for Latino women.¹⁴
- About 25 to 30 percent of Latinos 50 years or older have either diagnosed or undiagnosed diabetes.¹⁵

DIABETES RISK FACTORS AND LATINOS

Obesity: Being overweight or obese creates a higher risk for diabetes.

- Among Mexican-American women, 73% are overweight or obese, compared to 61.6% of the general female population.¹⁶
- Compared to other ethnic groups, the diets of Latino children are higher in dietary fat, sweetened beverages, and lower in fruits and vegetables.¹⁷
- About one-fifth (20.4%) of teenage Latinos are overweight or obese.¹⁸

COMPLICATIONS WITHIN THE LATINO COMMUNITY

- Having health insurance and a usual source of care – a medical “home” – are essential for people with diabetes to appropriately manage their condition.¹⁹
- Barriers such as language, non-citizen status, and low income result in decreased access to health insurance and health care services for Latino adults.²⁰
- It is the 6th leading cause of death within this community and the 4th leading cause of death among Latino women and Latino elderly.²¹

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Preventative care is vital in treating and managing the diabetic epidemic in the US. The high prevalence of obesity within the Latino community, in particular, makes this group extremely vulnerable to this disease.

Each year the number of cases within the community rises. In recent years it has become important to increase the number of programs that outreach to this community with culturally relevant educational material on the risks of being obese and the effects of diabetes and treatment. In addition, it is important to place special interest and time to achieving access to care for this population.

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Acknowledgements

This fact sheet was updated with the support of Sophia Chen, UCLA School of Public Health and Veronica Garcia, Health Initiative of the Americas. Layout and design by Jeremiah Cothren, Health Initiative of the Americas.

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OCTOBER 2008