

# Number of U.S. citizens with diabetes rising, minorities at risk

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The number of U.S. citizens with diabetes continues to climb and has reached the 26 million mark, with Hispanics among the groups at greatest risk, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In addition, the CDC estimates that more than a third of the adult population, 79 million people, have prediabetes, a condition in which a person's blood sugar level is higher than normal but below the level where they are considered to have diabetes.

Diabetes affected 8.3 percent of U.S. residents of all ages and 11.3 of people over 20, according to the National Diabetes Fact Sheet for 2011, released Wednesday by the Atlanta-based CDC.

Also, the report found that about 27 percent of the people with diabetes in the United States do not know that they have the disease.

"These distressing numbers show how important it is to prevent type 2 diabetes and to help those who have diabetes manage the disease to prevent serious complications such as kidney failure and blindness," Ann Albright, director of CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation, said in a statement.

Although anybody can suffer from diabetes, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian-Americans are the groups at greatest risk.

About 11.8 percent of Hispanics have diabetes compared to 7.1 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

Among Latinos, Puerto Ricans are the group with the highest incidence of diabetes, 13.8 percent, followed by Mexican-Americans, 13.3 percent; and Cubans, Central Americans and South Americans, 7.6 percent.

Among the other risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes are obesity, a family history of the illness and lack of physical activity.

Diabetes is the seventh biggest cause of death in the United States and is one of the main risk factors for heart diseases, stroke, blindness, chronic kidney problems and amputations.

People with diabetes are at up to four times greater risk of dying from coronary disease than non-diabetics.

"We know that a structured lifestyle program that includes losing weight and increasing physical activity can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes," the CDC's Albright said.

On current trends, diabetics will make up a third of the U.S. population by 2050, according to a CDC study released last year.

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