

How big of a problem is diabetes in the country?

Prevalence:

- In 2021, 38.4 million Americans, or 11.6% of the population, had diabetes.
 - 2 million Americans have type 1 diabetes, including about 304,000 children and adolescents
- **Diagnosed and undiagnosed:** Of the 38.4 million adults with diabetes, 29.7 million were diagnosed, and 8.7 million were undiagnosed.
- **Prevalence in seniors:** The percentage of Americans age 65 and older remains high, at 29.2%, or 16.5 million seniors (diagnosed and undiagnosed).
- **New cases:** 1.2 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes every year.
- **Prediabetes:** In 2021, 97.6 million Americans age 18 and older had prediabetes.

What are the biggest risk factors, specifically for type 2?

Best answer is to take the Know Your Risk Test on the ADA website. It factors like age, family history, ethnic background, weight, HBP, smoking. It is hard to say generally what are the greatest risk factors however, metaphorically, “if your genes load the gun, your lifestyle pulls the trigger!”

How large a role does stigma play in diabetes?

The stigma of any chronic disease can be distressing as people tend to define a person by their condition I/e. “Diabetic”. This presupposed that all people with diabetes are the same. When one thinks about that, it is

illogical. That is in part why the ADA focuses on “person centered language and refers to people with diabetes or more appropriately people living with diabetes. This emphasizes that you are a person first and that your condition does not define you.

Is there embarrassment from people about diabetes and why?

This is probably a question better asked to a person living with diabetes. From my perspective, some of the “embarrassment may be related to limitations on what people can or are allowed to do by others that gets back to the stigma.

How do we overcome stigma?

Think about people as “people” first and their condition as a life circumstance that they live with. People with diabetes should no more be characterized by their diabetes than people who suffer with headaches, arthritis, hypertension or nearsightedness.

Diabetes we know leads to other health issues... explain What can we all do to eradicate some of these risk factors?

Awareness of the risk of associated conditions leading to early screening and treatment before these conditions lead to complications. The saying that “You don’t have to be sick to get better!” Is true and most appropriate when it comes to preventing complications.

What's one message you want to get across to people about diabetes, both those living with and those without? It seems other agencies like heart association, cancer society etc get full support from people, but when it comes to diabetes (specifically type 2) it's not at the same level. Why is that?

The one message is that the body is completely connected and interconnected. By that I mean that dysfunction in one system leads to dysfunction in many of the others. For example diabetes is a leading cause of kidney disease and kidney disease is a leading cause heart disease. Diabetes is also a risk factor for a certain type of liver disease which is a risk factor for heart disease. Also diabetes is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Fortunately, improvement in one system leads to improve in the others. This is to say that recognizing diabetes early and treating it early and aggressively can lead to delay or prevention of many of the complications.

What do people think when they hear diabetes?

From my experience many people think about what they have heard or seen. Death, Dialysis, Amputation or Stroke. They think about injections and finger sticks and "special diets".

Talk for a moment about race and gender when it comes to diabetes and its effects.

This is an interesting question because I view race as a social not scientific construct. As such how one looks is

what typically defines their race. What is more important for a number of reasons is their ethnic heritage, culture and zip code! Yes the zip code, at least in the US is. A better determinant of your health outcomes than your genetic code! This is true because your zip code often defines your access to healthy foods, access to health care and access to many other social determinants of health.

For gender, there is a condition called gestational diabetes or diabetes that develops during pregnancy. This condition is often associated with the development of Type 2 diabetes after delivery AND the offspring of these ladies often are at increased risk for obesity and diabetes.

[Where do we go from here?](#)

Lets' discuss this as this is a big question!