

## United States' Diabetes Crisis among Asian Americans: Today and Future Trends

A recently released study<sup>2</sup> and the 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet<sup>6</sup> from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predict a dramatic increase in diabetes between 2010 and 2050. Using this new information from the CDC, the Institute for Alternative Futures diabetes model estimates that the number of Asian Americans living with diabetes (diagnosed and undiagnosed) in America will increase 103% by 2025 from 1,383,400 to 2,804,100.<sup>1</sup> The resulting medical and societal cost of diabetes will be \$27.4 billion – a 111% increase from 2010.<sup>1</sup>

Type 2 diabetes is becoming a common disease for many adults, and it is even beginning to affect school-aged children. Asian Americans have about an 18% higher risk of diagnosed diabetes than non-Hispanic whites,<sup>6</sup> though some Asian ethnic groups have a somewhat lower risk.<sup>23</sup> Then again, Asians are 20% less likely to die from diabetes than non-Hispanic whites.<sup>23</sup> However, diabetes can be responsible for complications such as renal failure, lower extremity amputations, blindness, heart attacks and strokes.<sup>6</sup>

In 2010, almost 1,383,400 Asian Americans living in the United States had diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Some 514,000 of them were undiagnosed<sup>1</sup> and possibly beginning to suffer from the common complications of diabetes, including eye, kidney, lower extremity, and heart damage.<sup>3</sup> The overall cost of diabetes among Asian Americans in the United States, including medical expenses and lost productivity, was about \$13 billion in 2010.<sup>1</sup>

### Pre-Diabetes and Diabetes Trends<sup>1</sup> among Asian Americans in the United States

U.S. Asian American Diabetes Data and Forecasts	2010	2025
<b>Population</b>	14,426,000	21,090,000
<b>Pre-diabetes</b>	3,674,000	5,372,000
<b>Diagnosed diabetes</b>	869,400	2,043,700
<b>Undiagnosed diabetes</b>	514,000	760,400
<b>Total with diabetes (diagnosed and undiagnosed)</b>	1,383,400	2,804,100
<b>Complications:</b>		
<b>Visual impairment</b>	158,200	353,600
<b>Renal failure</b>	1,730	3,250
<b>Leg amputations</b>	2,290	3,700
<b>Annual deaths attributable to diabetes</b>	7,580	13,520
<b>Total annual cost (2010 dollars)</b>	\$13.0 B	\$27.4 B
<b>Annual medical costs</b>	\$9.3 B	\$19.3 B
<b>Annual nonmedical costs</b>	\$3.7 B	\$8.1 B

Another 3,674,000 Asian Americans had pre-diabetes,<sup>1</sup> a condition in which the blood sugar level is higher than normal but not yet in the range for diabetes.<sup>4</sup> Many scientific studies have shown that relatively simple life-style changes, such as modest weight loss and increases in regular physical activity, can often prevent pre-diabetes from progressing to diabetes or significantly delay its onset by as much

as 58%.<sup>14</sup> However, if they do not take action, individuals with pre-diabetes can often progress to diabetes within 10 years.<sup>4</sup> So if current trends continue, the number of Asian Americans with diabetes is projected to increase to 2,804,100 by 2025.<sup>1</sup>

We now understand more about delaying or even preventing the onset of diabetes as well as how to effectively treat it, both of which can result in a dramatic reduction in complications and premature death.<sup>12,13,14</sup> Reducing the future burden of diabetes in the United States depends upon the promotion of targeted screening for asymptomatic adults to identify those with pre-diabetes and undiagnosed diabetes, improved access to quality medical care, and increased patient compliance with therapy.<sup>14,15,16</sup> However, halting the “twin epidemics” of diabetes and obesity will also require fundamental change in all segments of society, including greater access to opportunities for physical activity in our schools, workplaces, and communities and a significant shift in the American diet away from sugar, salt, refined carbohydrates, and saturated fats and toward more fruits and vegetables.<sup>15</sup> In short, we all play an important role in conquering diabetes.

These forecasts are based on available national diabetes data, including population projections extrapolated to the state, and the CDC’s 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet and latest diabetes prevalence projections to 2050. They assume a steady, but conservative, reduction in the number of people with complications due to better awareness of the risks of diabetes, earlier screening and intervention, and more effective therapies.

**For endnote references and details on the Institute for Alternative Futures Diabetes 2025 Forecasting Model Methodology, visit [www.altfutures.org/diabetes2025](http://www.altfutures.org/diabetes2025).**

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