

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

Diabetes is a very serious and rapidly growing problem for Hispanic Americans. Hispanic American adults are 90% more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes by a physician as non-Hispanic whites.¹⁹ A recently released study² and the 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet⁶ 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 Hispanic Americans living with diabetes (diagnosed and undiagnosed) in America will increase 111% by 2025 from 5,425,500 to 11,452,100.¹ The resulting medical and societal cost of diabetes will be \$109.9 billion – a 121% increase from 2010.¹

Type 2 diabetes is becoming a common disease for many adults, and is even beginning to affect school-aged children. Mexican Americans have an 87% higher risk of diagnosed diabetes than non-Hispanic whites⁶ with 45% of Mexican American boys and 52% of girls developing diabetes during their lifetimes.⁷ Those of Cuban and Central or South American origin have a much lower risk, about the same as non-Hispanic whites.⁶ There is wide variation by state with a high prevalence of diagnosed diabetes in California and Texas, whereas it is lower in New York, Illinois, and Florida.²⁰

In 2010, there were 5,425,500 Hispanic Americans in the United States with diabetes.¹ Some 2,015,700 of them were undiagnosed¹ and possibly beginning to suffer from the common complications of diabetes, including eye, kidney, lower extremity and heart damage.⁴ Mexican Americans suffer about 70% more kidney failures due to their diabetes as non-Hispanic whites, and they also have a 50% higher mortality rate.¹⁹ The overall cost of diabetes among Hispanic Americans in the United States, including medical expenses and lost productivity, was about \$49.8 billion in 2010.¹

Pre-Diabetes and Diabetes Trends¹ among Hispanic Americans in the United States

U.S. Hispanic American Diabetes Data and Forecasts	2010	2025
Population	48,551,000	68,810,000
Pre-diabetes	12,366,000	17,526,000
Diagnosed diabetes	3,409,800	8,346,500
Undiagnosed diabetes	2,015,700	3,105,600
Total with diabetes (diagnosed and undiagnosed)	5,425,500	11,452,100
Complications:		
Visual impairment	613,800	1,427,200
Renal failure	10,600	21,200
Leg amputations	16,780	29,600
Annual deaths attributable to diabetes	55,580	103,500
Total annual cost (2010 dollars)	\$49.8 B	\$109.9 B
Annual medical costs	\$35.4 B	\$76.7 B
Annual nonmedical costs	\$14.4 B	\$33.2 B

Another 12,366,000 Hispanic Americans had pre-diabetes,¹ a condition in which the blood sugar level is higher than normal but not yet in the range for diabetes.⁴ 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%.¹⁴ However, if they do not take action, individuals with pre-diabetes can often progress to diabetes within 10 years.⁴ So if current trends continue, the number of Hispanic Americans with diabetes is projected to increase to 11,452,100 by 2025.¹

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.^{12,13,14} 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.^{14,15,16} 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.¹⁵ 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.

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