



CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Diabetes in Young People

Diabetes Death Rates Among Youths Aged <19 Years – United States, 1968--2009

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in the United States. Recent national data shows that nearly a quarter of a million people under the age of 20 have diabetes.

Dr. Sharon Saydah is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today by phone to discuss the importance of preventing diabetes in young people. Welcome to the show, Sharon.

[Dr. Saydah] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sharon, what is diabetes?

[Dr. Saydah] Diabetes is a disease when your body doesn't manage the blood sugar very well. And that can either be because your body doesn't make insulin or because it doesn't use the insulin you have in the right way. And there are two types of diabetes. The first is type 1 diabetes and that's where your body doesn't make any insulin on its own; and this is usually diagnosed when a person is a child or an adolescent. And then there's type 2 diabetes. That's where your body has insulin but doesn't use it the most effective way; and that's typically diagnosed when you're older, in your fifties and sixties but can also be diagnosed during adolescence and young adulthood. Among youth, type 1 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes, but among the older population, type 2 is more common.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the symptoms of diabetes?

[Dr. Saydah] There are a number of symptoms of diabetes and people may have one or multiple symptoms, and these include frequent urination, being excessively thirsty or hungry, losing weight that's unexplained, feeling very tired all the time, being extremely irritable, or having any changes to your vision.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sharon, what are the potential health problems that can result from diabetes?

[Dr. Saydah] There are a number of health problems that can result from diabetes. There are acute, or immediate, problems and these often will lead a person to go to either an

emergency room or to their doctor and these problems occur when blood sugar gets too low or too high and can lead to a diabetic coma. If left untreated, these are the main causes of death among youth with diabetes. The good news is these are largely preventable, but recently, we have found that deaths among youth between the ages of 10 and 19 years old from diabetes have been increasing in the US. There're also longer term complications and these include heart disease, kidney disease, blindness, numbness in your hands and feet, and amputation.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the risk factors for developing diabetes?

[Dr. Saydah] There are a number of risk factors for diabetes. For type 1 diabetes, we don't have as many well-defined risk factors, although we are doing research on this, but we do know that some possibilities include genetics, auto immune factors, and environmental factors. For type 2 diabetes, being obese, physical inactivity, a family history of diabetes, having gestational diabetes in the past, or being older age are all risk factors for type 2 diabetes. We have found in the US that with an increase in obesity and the lack of physical activity in the country, we've seen an increase in type 2 diabetes among all ages, from youth all the way through adults.

[Dr. Gaynes] What can a person do to prevent the onset of diabetes?

[Dr. Saydah] For type 1 diabetes, there's really no known prevention, but we have made great strides in terms of treatment for type 1 diabetes. The good news is, for type 2 diabetes, we know that diabetes can be prevented through regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about diabetes?

[Dr. Saydah] Listeners can go to www.cdc.gov/diabetes.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Sharon. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Sharon Saydah about the importance of preventing diabetes in young people.

Remember, left undetected or untreated, diabetes can lead to severe health problems, such as kidney failure, heart disease, and even death. Although diabetes can be related to heredity, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and getting screened can prevent the disease and its complications.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.