



For Immediate Release:

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Diabetes on the Rise as LA County Obesity Rates Grow New report highlights local public health trend

LOS ANGELES – Diabetes continues to rise in Los Angeles County, according to a report released by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. The report, *Trends in Diabetes: Time for Action*, highlights the prevalence of diabetes from 1997 to 2011. In that time frame, the percentage of adults in the county with diabetes has increased from 6.6 percent to 9.9 percent, with more than 685,000 adults now affected by the disease.

“Type 2 diabetes accounts for more than 90 percent of all diabetes cases in the county with obesity as the primary preventable risk factor. On an individual level, Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or controlled by choosing smaller portions, drinking fewer sugary drinks, and exercising,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “On a county-wide level, we all need to work together to combat this alarming trend by ensuring access to high quality health care services, creating healthy environments that promote nutrition and physical activity, and providing public education that empowers individuals and families to make healthier lifestyle choices.”

In Los Angeles County, diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death. The risk of death among people with diabetes nearly doubles compared to people of similar age who do not have diabetes. Diabetes is also one of the most costly chronic conditions. Medical expenses for people with diabetes average more than twice as much as for those without diabetes, and the disease is estimated to cost more than \$6 billion a year in medical expenses in LA County alone.

“This report illustrates a startling truth: the rate of diabetes in Los Angeles County is getting worse, not better,” said Peter Braun, Executive Director of the American Diabetes Association, Los Angeles. “Our partnership with the LA County Department of Public Health has been critically important. The results of their findings show that there is a desperate need for all community groups, health care providers, businesses, schools and community leaders to take a hard look at how we can better leverage our resources and work together to address this devastating disease.”

There are three different types of diabetes, including Type 1, where the body (pancreas) produces little to no insulin; Type 2, where the body's cells resist the effects of insulin; and gestational, which occurs during pregnancy. Some common symptoms of diabetes are increased thirst and/or urination, extreme hunger, unusual weight loss, and extreme fatigue and irritability. However, in its early stages, people with diabetes may not have any symptoms. Living with uncontrolled diabetes long-term can lead to severe health consequences such as heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, neuropathy and blindness.



Additional key findings from the report include:

- Diabetes prevalence was highest among Latinos (13.5 percent) and African Americans (12.4 percent). Latinos and African Americans also have the highest prevalence of obesity.
- Asian/Pacific Islanders experienced the largest percentage increase (68 percent) from 1997 to 2011 (prevalence increased from 5.9 percent to 9.9 percent).
- Among adults aged 65 and older, nearly one in four (24.1 percent) reported having diabetes.
- Adults living in households below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) were nearly twice as likely to have diabetes compared to households at or above 200 percent of the FPL. This disparity is likely due to higher rates of risk factors for diabetes among those living in poverty, such as obesity and physical inactivity.

What you can do to prevent Type 2 diabetes:

- Follow a healthy meal plan consisting of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables; low-fat dairy products; lean cuts of meat, fish, and poultry; and limit intake of foods high in salt and sugar.
- Be physically active 30-60 minutes on most days of the week.
- Lose excess weight through a healthy diet and increased physical activity.

The report was issued in collaboration between the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the American Diabetes Association of Los Angeles. For a full copy of the report, *Trends in Diabetes: Time for Action*, visit: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ha> or <http://www.ada-losangeles.org>.

The mission of the American Diabetes Association is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by the disease.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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