

Half of Americans will be diabetic or pre-diabetic by 2020

24 November 2010, by Lin Edwards



(PhysOrg.com) -- A recent study by US health insurance giant UnitedHealth Group Inc. predicts that by 2020 over half of Americans will have either pre-diabetic conditions or type 2 diabetes if current trends continue, and the annual cost will be around \$500 billion a year by the end of the decade, or one tenth of all health care spending. The estimate for 2010 is \$194 billion.

The cost of healthcare in the US for non-diabetics was \$4,400 per person in 2009, and \$11,700 for diabetics. For those with complications arising from the disease the cost is around \$20,700 per year. If the predicted rise in the incidence of diabetes eventuates, the total cumulative cost to the US [health care system](#) may be as high as \$3.35 trillion, with over 60 percent paid for by the government. However, the report offers a number of suggestions, which if adopted could save as much as \$250 billion over the next decade.

The United Health Group report said around 27 million Americans are estimated to have diabetes and as many as another 67 million may have undiagnosed pre-diabetic conditions. These figures differ from those issued in October by the US government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which estimated at least 32 million American adults have diabetes and the number of

cases will more than double by 2050.

Complications of diabetes can include circulatory problems (sometimes leading to limb amputations), nerve damage, kidney disease, blindness, and it is a major contributor to heart disease and strokes. Pre-diabetes symptoms include high blood sugar levels, high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels, but the symptoms may not be obvious.

The report was titled: "The United States of Diabetes: Challenges and Opportunities in the Decade Ahead" and was produced for the National Diabetes Awareness month in November. It emphasizes the predicted rise in incidence of diabetes and related costs is not inevitable if measures are taken urgently to address the problem.

Diabetes is a progressive disease with people developing pre-diabetes many years before diabetes. This means there are many intervention possibilities that can prevent pre-diabetic people from developing the disease.

[Type 2 diabetes](#) is strongly associated with being seriously overweight or obese, and in the US the report estimates 68.3 percent of Americans were overweight or obese in 2008, with this figure rising each year. For people with pre-diabetes the odds of developing [diabetes](#) are considerably reduced if they reduce their weight by five percent or more and increase their levels of physical activity.

Simon Stevens, who is chairman of the UnitedHealth Center for Health Reform & Modernization and executive vice president of UnitedHealth Group, said what is needed now is "concerted, national, multi-stakeholder action." He said some of the most promising preventive care models should be scaled up, and health plans should be developed to "engage customers in new ways." The benefits to the US, both in economic and human terms, will be substantial if the steep

rise can be averted.

More information:

[www.unitedhealthgroup.com/news ...
3f-9250-9dfdc97cedc5](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/news/3f-9250-9dfdc97cedc5)

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