



UnitedHealth®

Center for Health Reform & Modernization

UNITED STATES OF DIABETES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DECADE AHEAD

A WORKING PAPER FROM THE UNITEDHEALTH CENTER FOR HEALTH REFORM & MODERNIZATION KEY FACTS

WHAT are the report's new estimates on the prevalence and costs of diabetes and prediabetes?

A new report from UnitedHealth Group's Center for Health Reform & Modernization estimates that more than 50 percent of Americans could have diabetes or prediabetes by 2020 at a cost of \$3.35 trillion over the next decade if current trends continue.

New estimates show diabetes and prediabetes will account for an estimated 10 percent of total health care spending by the end of the decade at an annual cost of almost \$500 billion – up from an estimated \$194 billion this year.

HOW is diabetes an epidemic?

Diabetes currently affects about 27 million Americans and is one of the fastest-growing diseases in the nation, according to the report. Another 67 million Americans are estimated to have prediabetes. There are often no symptoms, and many people do not even know they have the condition. In fact, more than 60 million Americans do not know that they have prediabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention predicts that one out of three children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetimes, putting them at grave risk for heart and kidney disease, nerve damage, blindness and limb amputation.

WHAT is prediabetes?

Prediabetes is a warning sign that diabetes is around the corner. People with prediabetes have blood sugar levels that are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. They also tend to have other diabetes risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and being overweight. African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics are also at increased risk of diabetes and family history plays a big part too. If we don't take action now, nearly 96 million Americans could develop prediabetes by 2020, according to the report.

HOW were the estimates calculated?

Estimates in the report were calculated using the same model as the widely-cited 2007 study on the national cost burden of diabetes commissioned by the American Diabetes Association (ADA).

The report's analysis draws in part on evidence-based research, randomized controlled trials and UnitedHealth Group's own real-world experience serving more than 75 million individuals worldwide.

WHY are you issuing this report?

The report, “The United States of Diabetes: Challenges and Opportunities in the Decade Ahead” offers practical solutions that could improve health and life expectancy, while also saving up to \$250 billion over the next 10 years, if programs to prevent and control diabetes are adopted broadly and scaled nationally. November is National Diabetes Awareness month, an opportune time to raise national consciousness of this massive “ticking time bomb” and practical steps that can be taken to defuse it.

WHAT are the report’s recommendations to help cut the costs of the diabetes epidemic?

The report focuses on four categories of potential cost savings over the next 10 years:

- **Lifestyle Intervention to Combat Obesity:** There is an opportunity to reduce the number of people who would develop prediabetes or diabetes by nearly 10 million Americans, through public health initiatives and the wider use of wellness programs to combat obesity.
- **Early Intervention to Prevent Prediabetes from Becoming Diabetes:** Evidence from randomized controlled trials and UnitedHealth Group’s own experience demonstrates that the use of community-based intervention programs – such as the UnitedHealth Group Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) in partnership with the Y – could reduce the number of people with prediabetes who convert to diabetes by an additional three million. The DPP is based on the original U.S. Diabetes Prevention Program, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the CDC, which demonstrated that with lifestyle changes and modest weight reduction, individuals with prediabetes can prevent or delay the onset of the disease by 58 percent.
- **Diabetes Control through Medication and Care Compliance Programs:** Better management of diabetes through improved medication and care compliance programs can help control the disease and reduce complications, such as UnitedHealth Group’s Diabetes Control Program (in partnership with community pharmacists).
- **Lifestyle Intervention Strategies for Diabetes Control:** The wider use of public-private partnerships to develop the infrastructure to scale nationally the promising learnings of the Look AHEAD Trial.

For more information about UnitedHealth Group’s efforts to stem the rising tide of diabetes and prediabetes, please visit www.unitedhealthgroup.com/diabetes.

About the UnitedHealth Center for Health Reform & Modernization

The Center serves as the focal point for UnitedHealth Group’s work on health care modernization and national health reform. The Center assesses and develops innovative policies and practical solutions for the health care challenges facing the nation. For more information about the Center and to view the full report, go to: www.unitedhealthgroup.com/reform.

About UnitedHealth Group

UnitedHealth Group is a diversified health and well-being company dedicated to helping people live healthier lives and making health care work better. With headquarters in Minnetonka, Minn., UnitedHealth Group offers a broad spectrum of products and services through six operating businesses: UnitedHealthcare Employer & Individual, UnitedHealthcare Medicare & Retirement, UnitedHealthcare Community & State, OptumHealth, Ingenix and Prescription Solutions. Through its family of businesses, UnitedHealth Group serves more than 75 million people worldwide. Visit www.unitedhealthgroup.com for more information.