

American Diabetes Month Top Ten Lists

November is American Diabetes Month, a time to bring attention to a national health epidemic that touches nearly 26 million Americans living with diabetes, the 79 million with prediabetes who are at gravest risk of developing the disease, the families of each of these individuals, and our national health care system at large. Following are “top ten lists” from UnitedHealth Group’s Diabetes Prevention and Control Alliance (DPCA) to help explain what you need to know about diabetes this November.

The 10 words you need to know about diabetes this November

1. **Prediabetes:** A condition in which a person’s blood glucose levels are higher than normal but have not yet reached the level for a diagnosis of diabetes. People with pre-diabetes are at grave risk of developing type 2 diabetes. **Take action:** Call your doctor today to schedule a blood glucose test and determine if you are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
2. **Type 1 diabetes:** Previously called insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) or juvenile-onset diabetes, type 1 diabetes develops when the body’s immune system destroys pancreatic beta cells (the cells responsible for making the hormone insulin, which regulates blood glucose). **Take action:** Talk to your doctor or check out resources to get the facts about [type 1 diabetes](#).
3. **Type 2 diabetes:** The largely preventable form of the disease, type 2 diabetes was previously called non–insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) or adult-onset diabetes, and accounts for approximately 90% to 95% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes in adults. While known as adult-onset diabetes, type 2 has become far more prevalent in recent years among children. **Take action:** Find out if your lifestyle could put you at risk for [type 2 diabetes, and what you can do prevent the disease from developing](#).
4. **Risk factor:** Primary risk factors associated with diabetes include: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, sedentary lifestyle/lack of exercise, being overweight or obese, being aged 45 years or older, and/or a family history of diabetes. **Take action:** View a [full list of diabetes risk factors](#) recognized by the American Diabetes Association (ADA).

Top 10 diabetes warning signs

1. Unquenchable thirst
2. Dry mouth
3. Increased hunger
4. Blurry vision
5. Feelings of tiredness and fatigue
6. Unexplained weight loss
7. Frequent urination
8. Tingling or numbness in hands, legs, and feet
9. Frequent infections or cuts and bruises that take a long time to heal
10. Red, swollen, and/or bleeding gums when you brush or floss

Top 10 diabetes risk factors

1. High blood pressure
2. High cholesterol
3. Sedentary lifestyle/lack of exercise
4. Being overweight or obese
5. Being aged 45 years or older
6. Family history of diabetes
7. History of diabetes during pregnancy
8. Giving birth to a baby that weighs more than nine pounds
9. Ethnic background (persons from certain ethnic groups, including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans might have higher rates of diabetes prevalence)
10. Polycystic ovary syndrome. Women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) are at higher risk of type 2 diabetes.

5. **Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG) test:** A test that measures a person's blood glucose level after he/she has not eaten for 8-12 hours and is used to diagnose prediabetes and diabetes and to help monitor people with diabetes. **Take action:** Find out if you or someone you know should get an FPG test [here](#).
6. **Body Mass Index (BMI):** A measure of body weight relative to a person's height, BMI is used to determine if someone is underweight, an appropriate weight, overweight, or obese. Obesity is defined as BMI \geq 25 kg/m². **Take action:** Calculate your BMI using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [BMI calculator](#).
7. **Diabesity:** The clinical and behavioral chain that leads from childhood obesity to adult obesity to the onset of type 2 diabetes, the largely preventable form of the disease. **Take action:** Want to learn other diabetes terms?
8. **Complications:** Leading complications from diabetes include: heart disease, nerve disease, blindness, dental illness, and limb amputations. **Take action:** Learn more about complications at the ADA's [website](#).
9. **Symptom:** Noteworthy symptoms of diabetes include: unquenchable thirst, dry mouth, increased hunger, blurry vision, feelings of tiredness and fatigue, unexplained weight loss, frequent urination, and/or tingling or numbness in hands, legs, and feet. **Take action:** Review a [full list of diabetes symptoms](#) from the ADA.
10. **The YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program (YMCA's DPP):** An award-winning, group-based lifestyle intervention program that helps people who are at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes prevent the disease through healthy eating, increased physical activity and other lifestyle changes. The YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program is part of the CDC-led National Diabetes Prevention Program. **Take action:** Find out if the YDPP is available in your town by visiting <http://www.ymca.net/diabetes-prevention/>.

Top 10 ways to control prediabetes and diabetes

1. Know your family medical history
2. Get active and set fitness goals
3. Make healthy food choices – eat lots of fruits and vegetables, lean meats and fish
4. Keep track of your carbohydrate intake – starches, sugar and fiber
5. Choose whole grain foods over processed grain products
6. Cut back on high calorie snack foods and sugar-sweetened drinks
7. Drink plenty of water
8. Go to the doctor regularly
9. Practice good oral health: brush your teeth with antigingival/antibacterial toothpaste daily
10. Test your blood sugar regularly

America's Health Rankings 2011

America's Health Rankings (AHR) is an annual assessment of the nation's health that shows successes and challenges on a state-by-state basis as evaluated by 23 measures evaluating the future and current health of the population. The 2011 report found preventable chronic disease on the rise – obesity and diabetes are offsetting improvements in smoking cessation, preventable hospitalizations and cardiovascular deaths.

Top 5 states with the lowest prevalence of diabetes according to United Health Foundation's "America's Health Rankings 2011" report

1. Alaska
2. Colorado
3. Utah
4. Minnesota
5. Vermont

Top 5 states with the highest prevalence of diabetes according to United Health Foundation's "America's Health Rankings 2011" report

1. Alabama
2. Mississippi
3. West Virginia
4. Arizona
5. South Carolina

Top 10 complications from diabetes

- 1. Heart disease:** Heart disease occurs when blood vessels to the heart become partially or totally blocked by fatty deposits. People with diabetes are more than twice as likely to get heart disease, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke. **Take action:** Consider changes to your lifestyle, including making healthier food choices and becoming more physically active.
- 2. Diabetic neuropathy /Nerve damage:** An excess of blood glucose can damage the walls of blood vessels that nourish the nerves that send messages to and from the brain, such as how to move muscles, digest food or pass urine. About half of all people with diabetes suffer from diabetic neuropathy. **Take action:** Monitor your blood glucose levels to prevent or delay nerve damage.
- 3. Diabetic retinopathy/Blindness:** Diabetic retinopathy is a condition that occurs when diabetes damages the blood vessels inside the retina, which can lead to vision loss. The condition is the leading cause of blindness in the United States among people 20-74 years old. In addition to diabetic retinopathy, people with diabetes are 60 percent more likely to develop cataracts and 40 percent more likely to suffer from glaucoma. **Take action:** Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.
- 4. Limb amputations:** Many people with diabetes have artery disease, which reduces blood flow to the feet or nerve disease and reduces sensation. Together, these problems make it easy to get ulcers and infections that may lead to amputation. **Take action:** Check your feet every day for red spots, cuts, swelling, or blisters, wear shoes and socks at all times, protect your feet from hot and cold, and ask about prescription shoes that are covered by Medicare and other insurance.
- 5. Weakened Immune System:** Diabetes can make people more susceptible to bacterial and fungal infections; having a cold, the flu or an infection will also raise blood sugar levels. **Take action:** Monitor your blood glucose levels and stay hydrated.
- 6. Periodontal disease:** An infection that affects the gum tissue and bone that hold one's teeth in place and can lead to bad breath, abscesses and tooth loss. **Take action:** Schedule dental checkups every six months and floss and brush your teeth with antiplaque/antibacterial toothpaste regularly.
- 7. High blood pressure:** As many as two out of three adults with diabetes have high blood pressure, which can also raise the risk for heart attack, stroke, eye problems, and kidney disease. **Take action:** Have your blood pressure checked regularly and taking action to reach your blood pressure target can prevent or delay diabetes problems.
- 8. Oral infections:** Diabetes can weaken the mouth's ability to fight infection, leading to oral infections. **Take action:** Schedule a dental checkup every six months.
- 9. Thrush:** Thrush is a yeast infection of the mucus membrane lining the mouth and tongue. People who have diabetes and have high blood sugar levels are more likely to get thrush because higher glucose levels cause yeast to multiply. **Take action:** Monitor your blood glucose levels.
- 10. Dry mouth:** Dry mouth can be caused by high blood sugar levels or by some of the medicines people with diabetes take to control symptoms. A dry mouth can increase the risk of cavities. **Take action:** Drink more fluids and try chewing sugar-free gum or sugar-free candy to help keep the saliva flowing.