



## Sugary Drinks and Diabetes

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Diabetes is a life-threatening health condition that has reached epidemic levels, having risen three-fold in the last 30 years and affecting more than 29 million Americans.<sup>1</sup> If current trends continue, a third of all children born in the Year 2000 – including half of Latino and African American children – will have diabetes sometime in their lives.<sup>2,3</sup> Already, almost one-quarter of teens have either diabetes or pre-diabetes, double the rate of just 10 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

### What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease marked by higher-than-normal levels of glucose (sugar) in the blood. It is caused by the body's inability to produce or use insulin, a hormone that acts to move glucose out of the blood and into cells to be used as energy. There are two types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes**, also known as juvenile diabetes, is an autoimmune disease in which the body does not produce the hormone insulin. There is no known way to prevent type 1 diabetes, which represents 5% of diabetes cases.
- **Type 2 diabetes** is the most common form, representing about 95% of all diabetes cases. It usually begins with insulin resistance, where the body does not use insulin properly. At first, the pancreas makes extra insulin to make up for it. But over time, the pancreas loses its ability to produce enough insulin to keep blood sugar at normal levels. Type 2 diabetes is preventable.

### Sugar Sweetened Beverages and Diabetes

Liquid sugar is a unique driver of today's skyrocketing diabetes and obesity epidemics. Diabetes rates have almost tripled over the past three decades,<sup>5</sup> just as sugary beverage consumption has doubled.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the rates of obesity (a major risk factor for diabetes) more than doubled for adults, tripled for adolescents and quadrupled for 6-11 year old children.<sup>7,8</sup>

A growing body of research shows that sugary beverages – because they provide all of their calories from sugar in liquid form – are uniquely harmful. We absorb liquid sugar in as little as 30 minutes,



much faster than a candy bar, leading to a spike in blood sugar that the body is not well-equipped to handle, particularly in repetition. These spikes in blood sugar can overwhelm the body and lead to the transformation of sugar into fat in the liver, which contributes directly to the development of diabetes.<sup>9,10</sup>

Studies have found:

- Drinking one or two sugary drinks a day increases the risk of developing type II diabetes by 26 percent.<sup>11</sup>
- After six months, daily consumption of sugary drinks increases fat deposits in the liver by 150 percent, leading directly to both diabetes and heart disease.<sup>12</sup>
- Sugary drink consumption is especially high in undiagnosed diabetic populations. In 2003-2006, 45% of diabetic adults in the U.S. consumed a sugary drink on any given day. Undiagnosed diabetics consumed significantly more (60% versus 38% of people with diagnosed but uncontrolled diabetes).<sup>13</sup>

## Diabetes Complications and Costs

Without careful management, diabetes can lead to complications such as: **Blindness, amputations, kidney failure, liver disease, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, and death.**<sup>14,15</sup> In 2006, an estimated 60 percent of people with diabetes in the United States had one or more of these complications.<sup>16</sup> In 2007, diabetes contributed to 231,404 deaths in the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Diabetes cost the United States an estimated \$245 billion in 2012, with \$176 billion in direct medical costs and \$69 billion in indirect costs such as lost productivity, disability and premature death. Average medical expenditures for people with diabetes are 2.3 times higher than for those without diabetes.<sup>18</sup>

According to a recent [UCLA study](#) which examined hospitalizations costs in California, a third of all hospitalizations in 2011 involved patients with a diabetes diagnosis. Hospital charges in California totaled \$35 billion – of that, an estimated \$17.3 billion was spent on patients with diabetes. On average, hospital stays for diabetic patients cost \$2,200 more than those for patients without diabetes, and a majority of these hospitalizations were paid for by public insurance.<sup>19</sup>



## Preventing Diabetes – Kick the Can!

Type 2 diabetes and its complications are preventable through lifestyle change that involves reducing sugary drink consumption, healthy food and beverage consumption, weight loss, and exercise. For those already diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, preventing diabetes complications also requires close monitoring of blood sugar, blood pressure, and blood lipid levels, and possibly medication and insulin treatments.<sup>20</sup>

**With sodas and sugary drinks being such a huge contributor to the diabetes epidemic, one of the simplest and most effective ways to turn around the diabetes epidemic is by “kicking the can.” Get involved and start spreading the word about sugary beverages and diabetes - it's time for us to stop drinking ourselves sick!**

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