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Study Shows Prediabetes Has More Than Doubled Among Children

A recent [study](#) has revealed a troubling sign for the nation’s young people: prediabetes has more than doubled among American children in the past two decades.

The study included children from 12 to 19 years old and reviewed data in the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC’s) National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 1999 to 2018. Researchers found a spike in prediabetes regardless of income, education and ethnicity; prediabetes in adolescents climbed from 11.6% to 28.2%.

There are many factors that could contribute to these findings, including obesity, according to Dr. Sameer Ansar, an endocrinologist with OSF HealthCare.

“The last 20 years the rate of obesity has gone up especially in Hispanics, African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and obesity has a direct correlation to the development of diabetes, so that I believe is the most common reason why the rate of prediabetes and diabetes has gone up in the last many years,” says Dr. Ansar.

According to the CDC, prediabetes means your blood sugar levels are not high enough to be considered Type 2 diabetes, but are high enough that it’s time for a change. A normal fasting blood sugar level is below 100; someone with prediabetes is between 100 and 126. Once levels have surpassed 126, it is classified as Type 2 diabetes. Prediabetes is common in adults, but 80% of those affected don't know they have it, according to the CDC.

“When somebody develops prediabetes the risk is they will most likely develop diabetes when they are older,” says Dr. Ansar. “Diabetes puts them at risk for heart disease, stroke, amputation, blindness, renal failure, so that’s why it’s very important to prevent diabetes early so they don’t develop these complications down the road.”

Dr. Ansar adds that reducing the risks of diabetes should be a family effort. Parents should be encouraging their children to get regular physical activity, reducing screen time, spending more time outside, eating a healthy diet and getting enough sleep.

“I think we need to encourage healthy activity early in life,” he says. “Some examples we give patients are to increase fresh fruits and vegetables into their diet, lean meats, more grain, less sugary foods, less starch and sugary drinks, less soda. Decreasing their time in front of a screen. The American College of Pediatrics recommends at least 30-60 minutes of activity during the day, which can be broken down into increments of 20 minutes. That would be a good start for kids so they don’t develop prediabetes or diabetes.”

Dr. Ansar points to guidelines from the CDC that states losing just 5 to 7 % of your body weight can prevent diabetes from developing into full-blown diabetes. Consult with your family pediatrician in order to create a plan for your child.

“The take home message is prevention is better than a cure and there is no cure for diabetes,” he says.

For more information on diabetes, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).