

More Young Adults than Ever Living with Prediabetes

A new Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study published in the journal [JAMA Pediatrics](#) is sounding alarm bells for health experts across the county. According to researchers, one in five American adolescents, and one in four young adults are now living with prediabetes.

Prediabetes means a person's blood sugar levels are elevated, but not high enough to warrant a diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes. However, it is often a reliable precursor for the disease.

Researchers analyzed nearly 5,800 individuals and found that 18% of 12 to 18 year-olds and 24% of 19 to 34 year-olds surveyed had prediabetes.

"Actually it's not that shocking to me, because our food system is so convenience-based now," said Shanell Schulz, Diabetes Educator, OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center. "We are seeing a lot of frozen meals, a lot more fast food options for kids, a lot of targeting towards kids about what to eat, and usually it's not the healthy foods."

Young people living in a prediabetic state are at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, which can lead to a number of health issues, including heart disease, nerve and kidney damage or impaired vision.

The symptoms of prediabetes are similar to those of diabetes, and can include fatigue and blurred vision, as well as excessive thirst and urination. These symptoms are an indication that a blood sugar level check may be needed. Schulz suggests that kids and adults alike should stay on top of yearly check-ups. She says prevention starts with your doctor.

"I think it's really important for kids and parents to have an annual physical each year, especially if they have that family history of diabetes, because the sooner we can catch diabetes, even in the pre-diabetes stage, the longer we can prolong things from progressing to diabetes," said Schulz.

Although people with prediabetes often go on to develop full-fledged diabetes, that's not always the case. Depending on how high a person's blood sugar is, there is potential the effects of diabetes can be reversed through lifestyle changes.

"It's basically what you would do if you had a diabetes diagnosis," explained Schulz. "You would control the amount of sugar in your diet, control your carbohydrates, you'd want to make sure to get a lot of exercise, because exercise can help burn off a lot of that glucose. But staying in touch with a dietitian throughout the process of that can really help kind of guide your goals along as you go."

Schulz says parents can also help to reverse the trend at home, by considering healthy food changes. For example she says corn, which turns into glucose, could be swapped out for broccoli, cauliflower or celery and carrot sticks. She also says sugary beverages like soda should be changed out for water or milk at meal times.

Getting kids involved in their own nutritional choices can set them up for a healthy future.

"It's really important that we talk nutrition, especially at a young age, because if kids understand what foods can bring up their blood sugar and which ones won't, especially if their parents have that history

of diabetes, it can really help set up their future to be a healthy one. So sitting down with a dietitian for even an hour can really bring a lot of light, and can get a good kick-start on their diet,” remarked Schulz.

OSF HealthCare has many resources available for prediabetes and diabetes care. To learn more about the tools you need to control your diabetes and live a full, healthy life, click [here](#). OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center also offers pre-diabetes education classes. Participants discuss nutrition management and the importance of regular physical activity. To learn more about this free class or to register, call (309) 664-3800.