

# U.S. Health Officials: Diabetes Rates May Be Waning

The drastic increases in the number of people living with diabetes and the number of new cases diagnosed each year may have leveled off, according to U.S. health officials.

Researchers found little change in the prevalence and incidence of diabetes between 2008 and 2012, following drastic increases in both numbers between 1990 and 2008.

“We are now for the first time showing that (those rates are) slowing down,” Ann Albright told Reuters Health. “We’re encouraged by that but it also means that we need to continue to watch this and make sure it’s not just a blip, to make sure we can sustain this and ultimately reverse this trend.”

Albright, who directs the Division of Diabetes Translation at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, is a co-author of the new report in JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association.

She added that more work is needed to make sure all groups benefit from the leveling off of diabetes rates. The number of new cases continued to increase among Hispanics and blacks, and the overall number of diabetes cases increased among those with less than a high school education, according to the new report.

“The interventions that are effective in treating obesity and preventing type 2 diabetes, we know what those are,” Albright said. “We need to be implementing them on a wider scale if we’re going to turn this tide.”

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the U.S. but is often underreported on death certificates, according to the CDC. The condition also costs the country about \$245 billion

each year.

Approximately 29 million Americans—about 9 percent of the U.S. population—have diabetes, according to the CDC. About 30 percent of those people are undiagnosed. Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes and is often linked to obesity. In type 2 diabetes, the body's cells are resistant to the hormone insulin, or the body doesn't make enough of it. Insulin gives blood sugar access to the body's cells to be used as fuel.

Type 1 Diabetes typically appears in childhood or adolescence and results from a failure to make insulin in the pancreas.

The new study found that in 1990, 3.5 of every 100 people had either type of diabetes, and by 2008, that number had climbed to 7.9 per 100. But as of 2012, it had risen only slightly, to 8.3 per 100.

As for the number of new cases each year, the researchers found it went from 3.2 per 1,000 people in 1990 to 8.8 per 1,000 people in 2008. It then fell to 7.1 per 1,000 people in 2012.

The researchers cannot say whether the leveling off of diabetes rates is due to changes in type 1, type 2, or both. Also, they can't say why trends appear to be changing, but it may be related to stabilizing rates of obesity.

The CDC reported in February that the overall obesity rates appear to be stable at about a third of all adults since 2003—with a drop reported among preschool-aged children (see Reuters Health story of February 26, 2014 [here](#): ).

"The improvement that we make in obesity and the diabetes prevention work that we do, these are all going to be contributing to slowing the rate," Albright said. "Ultimately we want to reverse these (rates)."