Diabetes among Oregonians with Disabilities
Oregon Office on Disability and Health

Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose levels are above normal.\textsuperscript{1} There are two forms of Diabetes: Type 1 and Type 2. In Type 1 diabetes, the body is unable to produce insulin. Type 1 diabetes is treated through insulin injections and diet control. This form of diabetes usually appears in early life.\textsuperscript{2} In Type 2 diabetes, the body develops insulin resistance and insulin deficiency, which leads to high glucose levels in the blood. Type 2 diabetes is highly prevalent among people living with disabilities compared to the general population.\textsuperscript{2,3}

The following data from the 2014 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) show the prevalence of diabetes (either type) among Oregon adults with and without disabilities. The BRFSS is a state based telephone survey that is conducted annually among adults in the US.\textsuperscript{4} This survey collects information on health risk behaviors and conditions among respondents.

**Figure 1. Diabetes among People with and Without Disabilities in Oregon and the United States, BRFSS 2014**

When we compare Oregon adults with disabilities to Oregon adults without disabilities we find:

- 18.7\% of adults with disabilities have diabetes compared to 6.1\% of adults without disabilities
- The difference between people with and without disabilities in Oregon is very similar to the difference between people with and without disabilities in the U.S. as a whole.

**Risk factors for diabetes:**

- Type 1:
  - Autoimmune, genetic, and environmental factors\textsuperscript{1}
- Type 2:
  - Older age, obesity, family history of diabetes, prior history of gestational diabetes, impaired glucose tolerance, physical inactivity, and race/ethnicity\textsuperscript{1}
  - African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians and some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at higher risk for Type 2 diabetes\textsuperscript{1}

**Health complications related to diabetes:**\textsuperscript{5}

- Cardiovascular disease
- Nerve damage
- Kidney damage
• Eye damage
• Foot damage (can lead to amputation)
• Skin conditions
• Hearing impairment
• Type 2 diabetes may increase the risk of Alzheimer’s disease

**Steps to reduce diabetes among people with disabilities:**
• Increase diabetes screenings programs that target people with disabilities³
• Research how people with disabilities manage their blood sugar levels³
• Increase knowledge of healthy living (e.g. diet exercise, risk factors) among people with disabilities
• Increase education on diabetes using targeted programs
• Increase research on diabetes prevalence and incidence among people with disabilities⁴
• Increase primary care visits for early detection and to slow or prevent disease process⁴

**Resources**
• National Diabetes Education Program
• CDC Managing Diabetes
• National Diabetes Prevention Program
• American Diabetes Association

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