



Diabetes and its Prevention

A Telligen White Paper

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The Diabetes Epidemic is Real, and Growing

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that nearly 30 million Americans are now living with diabetes—one in 11. Today, another 86 million are living with prediabetes, a health condition that increases a person's risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and other health problems—and 90 percent of them are unaware that they are prediabetic. When you add those numbers up, that's more than one-third of the people in the United States who are either dealing with the ill effects of diabetes or at high risk of developing diabetes. In addition, the indirect costs for employers are above \$65 billion in lost productivity! If today's trend continues, one in three Americans will be diabetic by 2050.

What is Diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes is the most severe form of the disease. It occurs when an individual's pancreas produces little or no insulin, a hormone needed to allow glucose (sugar) to enter cells and produce energy. When not treated, the resulting elevated blood sugars can damage the eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart. In extreme cases, individuals may go into a coma or die. There is no cure for Type 1 diabetes, but it can be managed for a healthier life.

Type 2 diabetes is more common and happens when the body becomes resistant to insulin. Although research cannot pinpoint what causes some people to develop Type 2 diabetes while others do not, scientists have identified risk factors that contribute to the development of Type 2 diabetes—and prediabetes markedly increases the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

People with prediabetes have abnormal blood sugar regulation. Their blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be characterized as diabetes. Without intervention, one-third of people with prediabetes will develop Type 2 diabetes within five years.

The risk factors for prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes are similar and include:

- Being overweight
- Being 45 years or older
- Having a family history of Type 2 diabetes
- Being physically active less than three times a week
- Having had gestational diabetes or giving birth to a baby that weighed more than nine pounds

How Does Diabetes Affect the Workforce?

The total annual economic cost of diabetes and prediabetes in the United States is \$322 billion per year, according to the American Diabetes Association®. One in five healthcare dollars is spent caring for people with diabetes.



How to Avoid Future Costs and Improve the Health and Well-Being of the Workforce

It's no exaggeration; diabetes is a serious workforce issue. But you can help prevent Type 2 diabetes, and it's typically much cheaper to prevent diabetes than to treat the consequences of the disease.¹

Workplace Diabetes Prevention Programs (DPP) are a highly effective way to improve the health of individual employees with prediabetes and help employers manage their healthcare costs. The CDC and the ADA estimate that the **average annual medical cost for a person with diabetes is \$13,700**,² of which \$7,900 is directly spent on treating the diabetes. A DPP cuts the risk of diabetes in half for prediabetics, and only requires a small investment of approximately \$300–\$500.

Through the implementation of a DPP in the workplace, employees are in the program with their peers, creating a larger sense of community. The influence of a fellow co-worker can encourage team building and making healthier choices throughout the day, leading to continued behavior change once they leave the office. An added benefit to the employer beyond a healthier and happier workforce often comes with cost savings through reductions in healthcare spending.

¹ CDC.gov

² https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/employers-insurers/manage_costs.html

Diabetes Prevention Programs

In 2002, a study funded by the CDC and National Institutes of Health (NIH) examined the effects of weight loss through both diet change and increased physical activity in the prevention and/or delay of the onset of Type 2 diabetes. This ground-breaking study showed that millions of high-risk people could indeed delay or avoid developing Type 2 diabetes through this lifestyle intervention programming known as a Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP). In fact, participants in the program **reduced their risk for developing diabetes by 58 percent!**

So, what is a DPP? A DPP is a one-year program led by a trained lifestyle coach. It focuses on long-term lifestyle changes including healthy eating, stress reduction and increased physical activity. Participants in a DPP learn skills necessary to a healthy lifestyle, including:

- Eating healthy foods without giving up all the foods they enjoy
- Adding physical activity to their lives
- Dealing with stress
- Coping with the challenges commonly faced when changing health habits

Through these measures and personalized coaching, DPP participants will achieve a 5 to 7 percent reduction in body weight. In addition, individuals experience health improvements and feel more energized and a stronger sense of well-being. Employers will reap the benefits of a healthier, happier workforce that feels more connected to the employer and the bigger movement to overcome the national epidemic of diabetes.

A DPP not only helps protect employee health, it also improves the overall happiness and satisfaction of the workforce, which may help retain employees and attract new talent. And when an employer provides coverage for a DPP, the results are even better. The program is more accessible and affordable for employees and one study even showed that lifestyle change program participants who received coverage for the program through their health insurance plan achieved better outcomes in attendance and higher weight loss than participants who paid for the program on their own or through a grant.

The threat of diabetes to our nation and our workforce is real. But it doesn't have to be. For more information about implementing a Diabetes Prevention Program and to help pave the way to health and well-being, call 888-323-8431.

