



2011 Fast facts about Diabetes

- › Most people with diabetes have type 2 diabetes (90%) and 9% have type 1 diabetes.
- › Diabetes can affect quality of life by limiting daily activities and the ability to work. Among those who reported having worked since first being diagnosed with diabetes, 11% reported that their ability to work had been limited by their diabetes.

Fast facts about Diabetes: Data compiled from the 2011 Survey on Living with Chronic Diseases in Canada

Introduction

In 2008/09, more than 2.3 million Canadians were living with diabetes. Diabetes poses challenges not only to those living with the disease, but also to their families, and the health care system. Optimal care and management of diabetes have been shown to prevent and delay the onset of complications and lessen their severity.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's 2011 **Survey on Living with Chronic Diseases in Canada** provides new information on how well Canadian adults with diabetes are managing their condition. This survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, interviewed a nationally representative sample of 2,933 people. Half were male, aged 20 years or over, with an average age of 63, with self-reported diagnosed diabetes.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that occurs when the body is either unable to produce enough insulin or unable to properly use insulin. Type 1 and type 2 are the most common forms of the disease. In this survey, of those who knew what type of diabetes they have, 90% reported having **type 2 diabetes**, 9% having **type 1 diabetes**, and less than 1% having a different type of diabetes.

Diabetes can affect quality of life by limiting daily activities and the ability to work. For instance:

- 6% of Canadians with diabetes reported that their participation in recreation, leisure activities or hobbies is limited significantly by their diabetes.
- 6% reported that their ability to do household chores or run errands (such as shopping) is limited significantly by their diabetes.
- Among those who reported having worked since first being diagnosed with diabetes, 11% reported that their ability to work had been limited by their diabetes (they either changed the type or amount of work they did or had to stop working altogether).

- › Two thirds (61%) of Canadians living with diabetes reported having at least one complication diagnosed by a health care professional.
- › Self-monitoring of blood glucose levels can help people living with diabetes adjust their lifestyle and medication to better manage their blood glucose.
- › The majority (88%) of Canadians living with diabetes reported that they check their blood glucose levels at home. Among them, 63% checked their blood glucose levels every day and an additional 29% checked their blood glucose levels at least once per week.

Diabetes may lead to complications affecting the eyes, kidneys, heart, brain, and limbs, if blood glucose, blood pressure and blood cholesterol are not controlled. Nearly two thirds (61%) of Canadians living with diabetes reported having at least one complication diagnosed by a health care professional. Specifically:

- 35% reported having eye or vision problems (diabetic retinopathy, cataracts or glaucoma).
- 18% reported having kidney problems (kidney disease or protein in their urine).
- 10% reported having nerve damage.
- 24% reported having heart disease or having had a stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA, sometimes called mini-stroke).
- 24% reported having problems with their legs or feet (poor circulation in feet or legs, foot or leg ulcers or infections, gangrene or amputation).

Good control of blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels can substantially reduce the risk of developing complications. Healthy lifestyles help prevent diabetes complications, while improving quality of life. Many people with diabetes reported making changes to their lifestyle, at least some of the time, to control their diabetes or for other reasons:

- 89% reported currently changing the types of food they eat.
- 70% reported currently trying to exercise or participate in physical activities.
- Four in five (77%) reported being overweight or obese. Among them, 80% reported having tried to control their weight or lose weight.
- One in four (24%) reported having smoked after they were first diagnosed with diabetes. Among them, 29% reported having successfully quit smoking.
- One in ten (9%) reported regularly having more alcoholic drinks than recommended - more than 9 drinks for women and 14 drinks for men per week - after they were first diagnosed with diabetes. Among them, half (52%) reported having stopped drinking or limiting their alcohol consumption.

For most people with diabetes, medication is also a core component of diabetes management:

- 87% of Canadians living with diabetes reported taking medications to control their blood glucose. Of these, 71% reported taking pills only, 13% reported using insulin only, and 16% reported using both pills and insulin to control their blood glucose.
- Of those who reported having been diagnosed with hypertension, 86% reported taking medication to control high blood pressure.
- 67% of Canadians living with diabetes reported taking medication to control blood cholesterol levels.



- › 75% of Canadians living with diabetes reported that their health care professional had measured their blood glucose in the previous 12 months, using a glycosylated haemoglobin test (often called an “A1C” test).

Self-monitoring of blood glucose levels can help people living with diabetes adjust their lifestyle and medication to better manage their blood glucose:

- The majority (88%) of Canadians living with diabetes reported that they check their blood glucose levels at home. Among them, 63% checked their blood glucose levels every day and an additional 29% checked their blood glucose levels at least once per week.

Access to health care is essential to ensure optimal diabetes management:

- Few Canadians with diabetes (7%) reported having experienced difficulties in obtaining routine or ongoing care for their diabetes in the previous 12 months.
- The majority (82%) of Canadians with diabetes reported that their family doctor is the health care professional most responsible for treating their diabetes.
- In addition, half (50%) of Canadians with diabetes reported having visited or talked with at least one other health care professional in the previous 12 months about their condition. Specifically:
 - › 32% had visited or talked with a diabetes specialist.
 - › 9% had visited or talked with a kidney specialist.
 - › 14% had visited or talked with a podiatrist or foot specialist.
 - › 28% had visited or talked with a dietician or nutritionist.

Clinical care is essential to ensure that diabetes is being properly managed and controlled, and most Canadians with diabetes report receiving such care:

- 75% reported that their health care professional had measured their blood glucose in the previous 12 months, using a glycosylated haemoglobin test (often called an “A1C” test).
- 81% reported that their health care professional always measures their blood pressure during clinic visits.
- 84% reported that their health care professional had measured their cholesterol levels in the previous 12 months.

Summary

Most Canadians with diabetes reported being actively involved in managing their disease and receiving appropriate health care. However, a substantial proportion of people with diabetes (two in three) reported having at least one complication likely associated with their disease or its risk factors. Less than one in ten reported difficulties in obtaining routine or ongoing care for their diabetes. Although most Canadians with diabetes reported trying to exercise and eat a healthy diet, the majority were also overweight or obese. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and having a healthy weight, together with medication adherence, are cornerstones of diabetes self-management.



Additional information on diabetes can be found online at:

- Public Health Agency of Canada:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/diabetes-diabete/index-eng.php>
<http://www.infobase.phac-aspc.gc.ca>
- Canadian Diabetes Association: <http://www.diabetes.ca/>
- Diabète Québec: <http://www.diabete.qc.ca/en/index.html>
- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Canada: <http://www.jdrf.ca/>

More information about the 2011 Survey on Living with Chronic Diseases in Canada can be found online at Statistics Canada: www.statcan.gc.ca