

Preventing Diabetes for Our Future and Theirs: The Diabetes Epidemic Among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

by the [National Diabetes Education Program](#)



The Asian American and Pacific Islander populations have long celebrated their rich traditions and cultural heritage. Increasingly, your heritage also includes a high risk for developing diabetes. Studies show that many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at an increased risk for type 2 diabetes. But there's hope. It is possible to lower your risk for developing type 2 diabetes – for your own health and for future generations.

Fifty-four million Americans have pre-diabetes, a condition that raises a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. But, diabetes prevention is proven and possible. Findings from the landmark Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) clinical trial prove that type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented in overweight adults with pre-diabetes – including Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders – by losing a small amount of weight.

Prevalence data for diabetes among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are limited. However, the lack of data for this population does not mean that there is not a problem. "Many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders don't realize their weight may place them at an increased risk for type 2 diabetes. That's why it's so important that we take small steps that will lead to big rewards—a long, healthy life to spend with family and friends," said Jeffrey B. Caballero, chair of the National Diabetes Education Program's (NDEP) Operations Committee and Executive Director of the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO).

For example:

- In Hawaii, Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders aged 20 years or older are more than twice as likely to have diagnosed diabetes as whites after adjusting for population age differences.
- In California, Asians were 1.5 times as likely to have diagnosed diabetes as non-Hispanic whites.

If you are at a high risk for type 2 diabetes, you can prevent or delay the onset of the disease by losing a small amount of weight and being more physically active.

To lose a small amount of weight and reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes:

- **Work with your health care team to set an achievable weight loss goal.** The DPP demonstrated that by losing at least 5 to 7 percent of your current weight – that's 10 to 14 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds – you can greatly reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes.
- **Be more physically active.** If you are not active, start off with a physical activity such as brisk walking, for a few minutes on most days of the week. Slowly add more time until you reach at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity five days a week.

- **Make healthy food choices every day.** Eat a colorful mix of fruits and vegetables daily. Choose water to drink. Eat smaller portions of high-fat and high-calorie foods to cut down on fat and calories.
- **Keep track of your daily food intake and physical activity in a log book and review it every day to see how you are doing.**

NDEP's *Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent type 2 Diabetes* campaign has tailored messages for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders including tip sheets available in [English and 15 Asian and Pacific Islander languages](#). For more information on diabetes in Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, visit <http://www.ndep.nih.gov> or call 1-800-438-5383. To learn more about AAPCHO, visit <http://www.aapcho.org>.

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