



National Indian Health Board
**NATIONAL TRIBAL
COVID-19 RESPONSE**

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Diabetes and COVID-19

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) is respiratory illness that was discovered in late 2019. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, and may appear 2-14 days after you've first been exposed to the virus.

While most people with COVID-19 are able to recover at home, people with diabetes may be at a higher risk of serious health problems related to the disease. American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are approximately 2 times more likely to have diabetes than the general population.

How can I lower my risk?

Follow Social Distancing Guidelines



Many Tribes and states have implemented social distancing guidelines, asking people to avoid public situations where the virus may spread. The goal of social distancing is to avoid contact with someone who may be sick with COVID-19. If you have diabetes, you should take extra care in following these guidelines.

- Stay home when possible.
- Ask your family or friends to help you with groceries and other needs, or see if your Tribe is offering any assistance for people with diabetes and other higher-risk health conditions.
- If you have to go out in public put distance between yourself and other people to reduce your risk.

Manage your Diabetes

When your diabetes is well managed, the risk of being severely sick with COVID-19 is lowerⁱ. Continue to eat healthy, traditional foods, and engage in physical activity. While your recreation center is probably closed, it is generally ok to go outside for walks or other physical activities as long as you are staying at least 6 feet away from other people. Talk to your doctor or local diabetes prevention program about how you can continue to manage your diabetes while following your Tribe's guidelines for social distancing.



Work with your Healthcare Provider

If you are having symptoms such as a fever, cough, or shortness of breath, call your healthcare provider!

Seek medical help immediately if you have:

- Difficulty breathing
- Pain or pressure in your chest
- Confusion or trouble staying awake
- Bluish lips or faceⁱⁱ

The Special Diabetes Program for Indians and COVID-19



The Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI), established by Congress in 1997 to combat the growing epidemic of diabetes in AI/AN, has become the nation's most effective federal initiative to combat diabetes.

Since the program began, AI/AN people have seen drastic improvements in diabetes risk, including reduced A1c levels and the largest reduction in rates of kidney disease for any race or ethnicity. Additionally, diabetes rates have not risen in AI/AN communities in approximately a decade. Serving approximately 780,000 people in 301 Tribal, Urban, and Indian Health Service programs each year, SDPI has been vital to Native communities.

Now, more than ever, SDPI is key for preventing disease and death in the AI/AN population.

Reach out to your SDPI Program for Assistance

Each SDPI program is unique to your Tribe, Urban organization, or IHS clinic. Reach out to your diabetes program to see how they can support you in managing your diabetes and reducing your risk of COVID-19.

If you need assistance, or are unsure who to contact, call your Tribe's health center, local IHS clinic, or reach out to your IHS Area Diabetes Consultant (ADC). The list and contact information for your ADC can be found at <https://www.ihs.gov/diabetes/about-us/area-diabetes-consultants-adc/>



SDPI Faces Challenges with Temporary Authorization and Static Funding

SDPI is currently renewed by Congress through November 30, 2020. While this allows continued funding to SDPI programs while they manage the challenges of COVID-19, Tribes have been asking for long-term funding for many years. Tribal leaders have shared that permanent reauthorization would bring needed stability to the program.

Additionally, the funding allocated to SDPI has been not been increased from \$150 million since 2004. With inflation, these dollars have lost a significant amount of their value. Current grantees have been forced to make their programs work with less, and Tribes that have not received funds in the past have been barred from applying.

For more information on SDPI, visit www.nihb.org/SDPI

ⁱ American Diabetes Association ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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For more information, visit NIHB's National Tribal COVID-19 Response page at www.nihb.org