The Burden of Diabetes in Alaska

Diabetes is an epidemic in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 37 million Americans have diabetes and face its devastating consequences. What’s true nationwide is also true in Alaska.

Alaska’s diabetes epidemic:

- Approximately 48,620 people in Alaska, or 8.8% of the adult population, have diagnosed diabetes.
- An additional 15,000 people in Alaska have diabetes but don’t know it, greatly increasing their health risk.
- There are 182,000 people in Alaska, 33.8% of the adult population, who have prediabetes with blood glucose levels that are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes.

- Every year an estimated 4,323 people in Alaska are diagnosed with diabetes.

Diabetes is expensive:

People with diabetes have medical expenses approximately 2.3 times higher than those who do not have diabetes.

- Total direct medical expenses for diagnosed diabetes in Alaska were estimated at $419 million in 2017.
- In addition, another $156 million was spent on indirect costs from lost productivity due to diabetes.

Improving lives, preventing diabetes and finding a cure:

In 2021, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases at the National Institutes of Health invested no money in diabetes-related research projects in Alaska, however $355,698 was invested in 2020.

The Division of Diabetes Translation at the CDC provided $1,616,750 in diabetes prevention and educational grants in Alaska in 2018.

Sources include:

- Research expenditures: 2021 NIDDK funding, report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm; 2020 CDC diabetes funding, fundingprofiles.cdc.gov/FundingProfiles/FundingQuery

Diagnosed diabetes costs an estimated $575 million in Alaska each year.

The serious complications include heart disease, stroke, amputation, end-stage kidney disease, blindness—and death.