

Diabetes hits millions more as risks rise

New CDC report:

57 million likely

Have 'pre-diabetes';

Georgia among states

Suffering severely from dangerous disease.

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The number of Americans suffering from diabetes has grown by more than 3 million since 2005, leaving nearly 8 percent of population afflicted with the disease, says a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report issued Tuesday.

In all, an estimated 24 million people across the nation are suffering from diabetes, according to 2007 estimates. Another 57 millions are estimated to have "pre-diabetes," a condition that puts people at greater risk of the disease.

The CDC did not have 2007 data available for state and counties Tuesday. The most recent CDC statistics available were from 2005, when 8.4 percent of adults in Georgia had diabetes. State health officials, however, say 9.1 percent of all adults in Georgia reported in 2006 that they had been diagnosed with diabetes.

The Southeast has the greatest percentages of adults living with diabetes for a variety of reasons, according to the CDC, including increased populations that have higher risks of developing diabetes.

Here is the breakdown for percentages of adults diagnosed with the disease in metro Atlanta area counties in 2005, according to the CDC: Cobb, 7.2; Cherokee, 7; DeKalb, 8; Fulton, 7.9; and Gwinnett, 7.9.

"Georgia certainly falls into part of the country that is very hard hit by diabetes," said Ann Albright, director of the CDC's division of diabetes translation. "Some have referred to this part of the country as the 'stroke belt.' But we could also refer to it as the 'diabetes belt.'"

Dr. K.M. Vankat Narayan, a diabetes epidemiologist at Emory University, said Georgia should be aggressive in fighting diabetes.

"Georgia is the public health capital of the world," he said. "We have the CDC here. So if there is any place that should implement prevention aggressively, we should be doing it. We should show the world how to do it."

State health officials have been educating residents about the effects of diabetes and its prevalence in Georgia while urging people to seek early detection. In 2005, diabetes killed 1,717 Georgians, according to the Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Public Health.

Diabetes is a disease associated with high levels of blood glucose caused by defects in insulin production, which causes heart disease, blindness and kidney failure.