

American Diabetes

North America used to be considered the Land of Opportunity. Now, it's known as the Kingdom of Gluttony. Our North American lifestyle has evolved into an idle, electronically-dependant, computerized, fast-food addicted mess. We've even earned the right to change the title of a known disease. No longer Type II Diabetes, this condition is now sometimes known as "American Diabetes".

In 2003, independent filmmaker Morgan Spurlock released a fascinating and funny documentary that would shock Americans right out of their fiberglass fast food joint booths. In this film, called "Super Size Me", Mr. Spurlock subjected his body to a diet comprised of only McDonalds fast food. Whenever a McDonalds attendant offered to "supersize" his meal, he was obliged to accept.

Watching this film, we can see how Spurlock's body was affected to the point where his doctor removed himself from the project. Further indications of how diet affects health were evident in the interviews conducted across the United States. One of the most shocking interviews featured a diabetic man who continued to eat junk food and avoid exercise, despite being at the brink of death. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case. Nearly 18 million people in the United States suffer from diabetes, and about 3 million of them don't even know that they have it.

Causes of "American Diabetes"

Have you ever been to a fast-food restaurant and witness a "wall of fame", where gluttonous patrons have downed half-pound burgers or patties stacked six-high on a bun? Truth be told, our American diet is nothing to brag about. While diabetes is considered to be a genetic disease, the probability of acquiring it definitely increased in relation to body weight. As you gain weight, your chances of developing diabetes increases. What's really sad is that many Americans don't fight this weight gain. As a matter of fact, the average American chooses not to perform the minimum recommended levels of exercise. This sedentary lifestyle, combined with overeating, is precisely why the levels of occurrence for diabetes has soared in America and other developed countries.

Consequences of "American Diabetes"

Aside from the obvious consequences of diabetes, like ill health, poor vision, gangrene, blindness, digestive problems and even death, there are substantial monetary tolls as well. In the year 2002, this condition cost the United States economy a staggering \$132 billion:

- * \$91.8 billion for direct medical expenditures
- * \$23.2 billion for diabetes care
- * \$24.6 billion for complications caused by diabetes
- * \$44.1 billion for medical conditions related to diabetes.

Approximately half of the direct medical expenditures, or about \$50 billion, were directed to the care of diabetics aged 65 or older.

Without question, diabetes is a huge problem in the United States. In 2002, it ranked sixth as the leading cause of death in America. This is taking a grave toll on the country's healthcare system, which is already stretched thin. If a cure for the disease were to be found, the economy could save as much as \$6 trillion over the next 30 years. If a cure is not found, we'll need to find some alternative measures to prevent and treat diabetes.

Education is one step in the right direction. With the proper information, Americans will be better advised to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, and change their diets. These two small factors can help to reduce the huge amounts of money that the American government has had to invest in their healthcare system. While there is already a national movement for eating better underway, it may take some years until we see the results.

Maybe with a little hard work, the term "American Diabetes" will be nothing more than a piece of North American history.