

Diabetes Rate to double by 2050

ANDREW TILLET
CANBERRA

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One in seven people will be living with type 2 diabetes by 2050 unless Australians reverse their unhealthy lifestyles, new research warns.

Experts say the surge in cases will swamp the health system, costing \$14 billion a year in today's dollars by the middle of the century.

In the first report of its kind, the University of Canberra's National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling has examined the long-term burden that type 2 diabetes will have on the community.

Type 2 diabetes is regarded as a "lifestyle disease", with the number of sufferers rising dramatically in recent years because of growing obesity rates, poor diets and a lack of exercise.

But the number of diagnosed and undiagnosed type 2 sufferers is forecast to almost double to 1.6 million people by 2050, affecting 14.4 percent of the population. Over the same period, the annual cost of managing and treating diabetes will rise to \$14 billion from \$2.2 billion now.

Health complications experienced by type 2 sufferers will include more than 270,000 heart bypasses, 250,000 heart attacks and more than 750,000 kidney problems by 2050.

Researchers also compared five different methods of managing diabetes, finding a combination of all would achieve the best results.

Introducing a new class of drugs to combat diabetes would deliver the biggest savings per patient and would result in the highest number of complications avoided but was also the most expensive option.

Improving the way doctors manage diabetic patients, such as reducing lifestyle risk factors, was least expensive but also delivered big savings and avoided complications.

Exercise was the cheapest option to improve the health of diabetes sufferers but the full benefits would not be seen because researchers believed only 1 in 10 people would participate.

One of the report contributors, Associate Professor Jonathon Shaw of Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, said the results were alarming.

He said Australians were living in a society where it was increasingly hard to be physically active and consumption of junk food was encouraged because it was cheaper than the more nutritious options.

A new online resource aimed at cutting rates of type 2 diabetes, cancers and high cholesterol will be launched by Diabetes WA today.

For more information go to www.myhealthybalance.com.au

