1 in 5 Adolescents in the U.S. is Prediabetic

The health, food, and education systems in the United States are failing young people. According to a new study from JAMA Pediatrics, an estimated 18 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 18 are prediabetic, while 24 percent of young adults aged 19-34 were estimated to be prediabetic. Young people with obesity were more likely to be prediabetic. That's not great news for Americans, as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development predicts that 47% of the United States population will be obese by 2030.

A Big Bundle

Diabetes is a serious yet manageable health condition that costs the United States healthcare system an estimated 327 billion dollars in the year 2017. According to Dr. Linda J. Andes, a mathematical statistician with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and one of the lead authors of this study,

> *The average medical expenditures for people with diagnosed diabetes were about $16,752 per year. After adjusting for age group and sex, average medical expenditures among people with diagnosed diabetes were about 2.3 times higher than expenditures for people without diabetes…"*

This study should be greeted with a call for greater education and awareness. Dr, Andes continues…

> *We hope that this research expands the pool of available research on prediabetes in adolescents and young adults. Monitoring the number of young adults and adolescents with prediabetes and varying levels of glucose tolerance can help*

> *determine the future risk of type 2 diabetes in youth. We also hope that this news sounds an alarm for young people, parents and clinicians – and that those who may be at risk or living with prediabetes are encouraged to take the necessary steps needed to prevent or delay progression to type 2 diabetes.*

Recommended: *How To Heal Your Gut*

Pushing Backwards

Instead, this news will likely be greeted with a chorus of "get your ass off the couch and eat better." Unfortunately, that outdated and patronizing advice ignores the difficulties faced by young people today. Food that isn't sprayed with large amounts of agricultural chemicals, chosen for its shelf life rather than taste, and processed in a way that kills the little nutrition not bred out of it comes at a premium. If you want good quality, tasty food, you're going to have to pay for it.

There's also the issue of nutrition education. Nutrition science is always evolving as science is better able to measure more and more variables in food. But that still doesn't mean consumers will be getting all of that info. Coca-Cola finances in-house research institutes like the "Beverage Institute for Health and Wellness," designed to promote the hydration benefits of their products while conveniently ignoring the health damage caused by sugary drinks. Nutrition and dietetics conferences are frequently sponsored by corporations with a vested interest in the least healthy option, like McDonald's, Hershey's, and Kraft Foods. This year's Food and Nutrition Conference Expo's sponsors included PepsiCo, Big G Cereals (the manufacturer of Lucky Charms, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, and Cocoa Puffs), and SPLENDA® Sweeteners. This is not to say all studies have been bought, but it is difficult, sometimes confusing, and incredibly time-

consuming to sift through all the noise and find truly helpful health information.

Related: *Holistic Guide to Healing the Endocrine System and Balancing Our Hormones*

This doesn't even touch on the issue of the weight fluctuations that can occur with prescription medication, especially antidepressants and mood stabilizers. Even if you have the education needed to chose well and can afford quality food, you're still at a massive disadvantage. Studies have found that the offspring of generations of mice fed a poor, low-fiber diet lose a high percentage of gut bacteria diversity, and they are unable to get it back. Though human studies haven't been conducted, it's not a stretch to think the same phenomenon is happening in people. At the end of all of this, the most basic act of care-taking we can perform (eating) can feel like yet another part-time job. No wonder more Americans are dying sooner.

The Bad Snowball

It's highly likely that some of those prediabetic twelve-year-olds who have been diagnosed with prediabetes are being raised by some of those 34-year-olds with the same condition, or its next evolution stage, diabetes. The percentages of young people diagnosed with prediabetes are lower than the nearly 34 percent of Americans adults with prediabetes. Children and young adults may catch up sooner than expected, especially if the American way of life, eating, and addressing health continues the path it is currently on.

Sources:

- *Prevalence of Prediabetes* – CDC.gov
- *Prevalence of Prediabetes Among Adolescents and Young Adults in the United States, 2005-2016* – JAMA Pediatric
- *Your poor diet might hurt your grandchildren's guts* – Science Mag

- *I Went to the Nutritionists' Annual Confab. It Was Catered by McDonald's.* – Mother Jones
- *How Coca-Cola Disguised Its Influence on Science about Sugar and Health* – Union of Concerned Scientists
- *The U.S. is the most obese nation in the world, just ahead of Mexico* – MarketWatch