

Latinos With Diabetes More Likely to Develop Heart Disease

Experts encourage Latinos with diabetes to know their risk factors and make healthy lifestyle changes to prevent heart disease.

October 3, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

Latino adults with diabetes are significantly more likely to develop heart disease compared with non-Latino white adults. [Cardiologist Liset Stoletniy, MD at Loma Linda University International Heart Institute](#) (LLU), encourages Latinos with [diabetes](#) to understand their risk factors for [heart disease](#) and prioritize healthy lifestyle choices.

Diabetes is a major risk factor for heart disease. In fact, adults with diabetes are twice as likely to develop heart disease. What's more, Latinos have higher rates of [type 2 diabetes](#), according to Stoletniy, who says Latinos have a greater risk of developing diabetes due to a genetic predisposition to insulin resistance.

Latinos are also more likely to develop [prediabetes](#), or higher than average blood sugar levels, at a younger age. Indeed, more than 22% of Latino youth and 28.7% of Latino young adults have prediabetes, compared with 15.8% and 21% of non-Latino white youth and young adults, according to the [Keck School of Medicine](#).

Diabetes occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or cells are unable to use it. The two main kinds of diabetes are type 1 and type 2. In type 1 diabetes, the body's immune system destroys the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. It typically arises during childhood.

Type 2 diabetes is the more common form of the disease and usually arises later in life. Although the body still produces some insulin, cells are unable to use it for energy, a condition known as insulin resistance.

"Diabetes is a silent enemy. It doesn't just affect blood sugar. It damages the heart, kidneys, blood vessels and the brain," Stoletniy said. "When sugars aren't controlled, every cell in the body

suffers.”

To [treat diabetes](#) and decrease the risk for [diabetes](#)-associated stroke and heart disease, experts recommend lifestyle changes such as increasing [physical activity](#), following a [healthy diet](#) and, for those with overweight or obesity, losing weight.

Additionally, experts emphasize the importance of simple daily habits that can help prevent sugar spikes and protect the heart, such as taking a 30-minute walk after eating a healthy meal.

“Tortillas and tamales are part of culture, and that’s beautiful. But portion and preparation matter—one tortilla, not four, or tamales made without lard. Small changes protect the heart without erasing tradition,” Stoletniy said.

She also recommends Latino adults get checked regularly for A1C, blood pressure, cholesterol and weight. [Go here](#) for more diabetes resources.

To read more, click [#Diabetes](#). There, you’ll see headlines such as “[Heart Disease and Cancer Remain Leading Causes of Death in U.S.](#),” “[Forget 10,000 Steps a Day. You Don’t Need That Many](#)” and “[As Insurers Struggle With GLP-1 Drug Costs, Some Seek to Wean Patients Off](#).”