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**DIABETES IN MIDDLE AGE 'CAN REDUCE YOUR LIFE**  
  
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SIX YEARS'

BY JENNY HOPE MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

HAVING diabetes in middle age will cut your life short by an average of six years, say researchers.

For the first time, a study has calculated the reduction in life expectancy from having type 2 diabetes, the kind linked to being overweight in middle age.

Diabetes is known to double the risk of heart attacks and strokes, but the new findings show people with type 2 diabetes are also at greater risk of dying from cancer, infection and mental disorders.

More than 2.5million Britons have diabetes, with 800,000 being unaware of the condition.

Scientists from the Emerging Risk Factors Collaboration Ð co-ordinated by the University of Cambridge Ð analysed data on 820,900 people, each of whom was monitored for about a decade.

Even after accounting for other risk factors such as age, sex, obesity and smoking, the researchers found people with diabetes were at increased risk of death from several common cancers, infections, mental disorders, and liver, digestive, kidney and lung diseases. About 60 per cent of the reduced life expectancy in people with diabetes is attributable to blood vessel diseases Ð such as heart attacks and strokes.

Only a small part of these associations are explained by obesity, blood pressure, or high levels of fat in the blood Ð conditions which often co-exist with diabetes.

The study, involving more than 250 scientists from 25 countries, also suggests people with diabetes may be at increased risk of death from intentional self-harm Ð a finding which the scientists say requires further study, including investigation of a possible link between diabetes and depression.

It was funded by the Medical Research Council, British Heart Foundation and Pfizer, and is published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Researcher Naveed Sattar, of the University of Glasgow, said: 'The findings not only show the extensive range of complications linked to diabetes, but also the importance of raised sugar levels, as opposed to cholesterol and blood pressure to such complications.

'Overall, the findings should helpÊincentivise diabetes prevention in those at high risk.

There is also some good news here.

'We show that a halving of the risk of premature death in patients with diabetes compared toÊthose without, over the last four decades, is almost certainly linked to betterÊtreatment in diabetes patients.'

Professor Stephen Holgate, chairman of an MRC research board, said: 'Preventing diabetes becomes that much easier when we have a complete picture of the debilitating effect it has across the body and we know what steps to take to mitigate the damage.'

REUTERS

Diabetics have higher risk of death from cancer

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Doctors know that diabetics have a higher than normal risk of dying of heart attacks or strokes, but new research on Wednesday showed that having diabetes also ups the risk of dying from many cancers and other diseases.

The findings shed light on the potential burden of disease that will build in the future as the number of cases of diabetes is predicted to rise dramatically in coming decades.

"These findings highlight even more the need to prevent diabetes and to understand it better," said Emanuele Di Angelantonio of Britain's Cambridge University, who worked on the study as part of an international collaboration.

"They show that diabetes is not only a cardiovascular risk factor, but is linked as well to other conditions."

The research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), collated and analyzed data from 97 previous studies involving more than 820,000 people worldwide.

It found that being a diabetic hiked the odds of dying from cancer by 25 percent, and also heightened the risk of death from infection, kidney and liver disease.

The risk of death was only higher in people with poorly controlled diabetes, however, as indicated by high blood sugar levels after a fast.

Among the biggest cancer risks for diabetics were liver and pancreatic cancer, colorectal or bowel cancer, and lung cancer.

Diabetes is reaching epidemic levels with an estimated 280 million people, or 6.4 percent of the world's population, suffering from it and numbers predicted to rise further as obesity rates also increase.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says up to a third of U.S. adults could have diabetes by 2050 they continue to gain weight and shun exercise.

Another study published this week found that millions of people with diabetes are undiagnosed or poorly treated, raising their risk of early death from heart disease and of serious complications like blindness and chronic kidney disease.

The Cambridge-led study found that aside from cancer and vascular diseases such as stroke, diabetes was also associated with deaths from many other causes including renal disease, liver disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, mental disorders, pneumonia, other infectious diseases.

"A 50-year-old with diabetes died, on average, six years earlier than a counterpart without diabetes," said Cambridge University's John Danesh, who also worked on the study.

The study did not look at why these death rates were higher among diabetics, so the researchers could not say whether diabetes link was simply a proxy for generally poorer health.

"Preventing diabetes becomes that much easier when we have a complete picture of the debilitating effect it has across the body and we know what steps to take to mitigate the damage," said Stephen Holgate of Britain's Medical Research Council, which part-funded the study.

SOURCE: [bit.ly/g5guqz](http://bit.ly/g5guqz) The New England Journal of Medicine, online March 2, 2011

(^^^ This is a link to the Journal homepage, not to the actual article)

The Guardian

**Study: 50-year-old with diabetes dies 6 yrs sooner**

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**STEPHANIE NANO**

A 50-year-old with diabetes dies six years sooner than someone without the disease, and not just from a heart attack or a stroke, new research suggests.

The large international effort to measure diabetes' toll found the disease also raises the risk of dying prematurely from a host of other ailments, even breast cancer and pneumonia.

"It's quite a wide sweep of conditions," said Dr. John Danesh of Cambridge University in Britain, who led the team of researchers.

While most people think of heart problems, diabetes surprisingly "appears to be associated with a much broader range of health implications than previously suspected."

Putting the six years lost in context, he said, long-term smoking shortens life by 10 years.

The analysis used pooled medical information for 820,900 people from nearly 100 studies done mostly in Europe and North America.

The results are published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

Diabetes, the seventh leading cause of death in the U.S., affects about 26 million Americans, or 8 percent, including 7 million who haven't been diagnosed.

Most in the study were thought to have the most common kind — Type 2 — which occurs when the body makes too little insulin or cannot use what it does make to regulate blood sugar.

High blood sugar can damage nerves and blood vessels, and is a major cause of heart disease.

The new research didn't include those who had heart disease when they were first enrolled.

Participants were followed on average for 13½ years, and there more than 123,000 deaths.

Overall, death rates from various causes were higher for those with diabetes than those without.

The researchers took into account other risk factors that could influence the results: age, gender, smoking and weight.

Type 2 diabetes is tied to obesity.

They found that those with diabetes had double the risk of dying from a heart attack or stroke, compared to those without the disorder.

But they also found that diabetics had a 25 percent higher risk of dying from cancer and were more likely to die from a variety of illnesses including infections, lung and kidney disease as well as falls.

Exactly how diabetes raises those risks isn't clear, but in the case of infections, it could be that diabetes weakens the immune system, the researchers said.

Diabetes can cause vision problems and loss of feeling in the legs, which may be the reason for falls, they said.

Danesh said one intriguing finding was a higher risk of suicide in those with diabetes. Other research has linked diabetes with depression, he noted.

The results are "another reason to try to normalize blood glucose in people who have diabetes," through diet, exercise and medication, said Dr. Alvin Powers, a diabetes specialist at Vanderbilt University. "There have been smaller studies that hinted at this but nothing where a study of this size looked at so many different outcomes."

Danesh and his colleagues also estimated diabetes' effect on life expectancy.

They calculated that a 50-year-old diabetic without heart disease dies about six years earlier than someone without the disease, with 40 percent of the difference due to cancer and conditions other than heart disease.

"It underscores the need to prevent diabetes," Danesh said.

Previous studies have shown a possible link between diabetes and cancer.

The new paper tied some, but not all, cancers; the increased risk ranged from 25 percent for breast cancer to double for liver cancer.

Danesh said people with diabetes should get age-appropriate cancer screenings.

Last year, a joint report from the American Diabetes Association and the American Cancer Society looked at the issue and said that it wasn't clear whether any connection was direct, indirect or perhaps because the two disorders share common risk factors, like obesity.

The new research squares with that report's conclusion that "there's a lot more we need to understand about diabetes and the link to cancer," said one of the authors, Dr. Richard Bergenstal of the International Diabetes Center at Park Nicollet in Minneapolis. He a former president of the diabetes group.

While adding to the evidence, the study doesn't answer the question of why, he said.

"Diabetes is a serious condition.

We often don't quite think about it quite that way," Bergenstal said.

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Online:

Diabetes information: http://www.diabetes.org and http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/

New England Journal of Medicine: http://www.nejm.org