

A Health of the Heartland Fact Sheet: Diabetes



What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a life-long disease where the body cannot produce or use enough insulin, which helps turn sugar into energy.¹ When there isn't enough insulin, sugar stays in the bloodstream and causes damage to the body.¹ Diabetes requires careful management and factors like insurance coverage and income can impact peoples' ability to get treatment. In 2023, nearly 600,000 Missourians had been diagnosed with diabetes, and it's estimated that an additional 165,000 have undiagnosed diabetes.⁴ Diabetes is more common in Midwestern states than other states.⁵

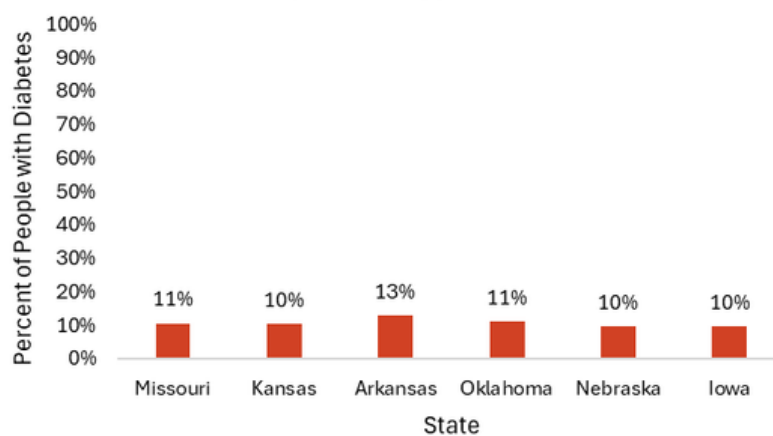
County	Percent of People with Diabetes
Jackson, MO (Kansas City)	11%
Jasper, MO (Joplin)	11%

Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2025

There are Different Types of Diabetes¹

- **Type 1 Diabetes:** The body attacks itself by mistake, stopping the creation of insulin.
 - Typically appears in children and teenagers.
- **Type 2 Diabetes:** The body doesn't respond normally to insulin.
 - Typically affects adults. Type II diabetes is preventable.
- **Prediabetes:** Blood sugar is high, but not high enough to be Type 2 diabetes.
 - Prediabetes can be a warning sign that someone may develop type 2 diabetes.
 - Prediabetes may be reversed or prevented through diet, exercise, and other lifestyle changes.
- **Gestational Diabetes:** Pregnancy hormones change the body's ability to effectively use insulin.
 - Typically starts in the second trimester and ends after pregnancy.
 - Around half of women who get gestational diabetes will develop type 2 diabetes later in life.

Percent of People with Type II Diabetes, 2023



Source: CDC United States Diabetes Surveillance System, 2025

The Impact of Diabetes

When diabetes is not treated properly, it can cause blindness, kidney failure, nerve damage, and heart conditions.¹ Diabetes is a top 10 (8th) cause of death in Missouri.⁴ Risk factors for Type II diabetes include:

- Lack of Opportunities to Exercise
- Lack of Insurance
- Lack of Access to Healthy and Affordable Food
- Poverty
- Discrimination⁶

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Public Health Intervention

Missouri's Primary Care Health Home (PCHH) Program offers care coordination and management for those on Medicaid with chronic health conditions like diabetes while also addressing social determinants of health.⁴ Additionally, expanding Medicaid coverage to those who previously lacked insurance, which Missouri has done but Kansas has not, increases the chances of getting a diabetes diagnosis and the right treatment.⁷

Diabetes is responsible for 1 out of every 4 dollars spent on health care in the United States.

-Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

KCU's Impact

The Center for Population Health and Equity Student Health Advocates program removes barriers to care, promotes health and identifies critical resources to help people navigate health care services and systems with community partners. In partnership with Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, KCU students establish and maintain short-term relationships with patients to support eye health, assisting as they schedule and attend follow-up vision appointments to address diabetic retinopathy.

References

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ABOUT KANSAS CITY UNIVERSITY

Kansas City University was founded in 1916 as one of the nation's five original osteopathic medical schools. Today, KCU is a fully accredited, private, not-for-profit health sciences university strategically located on two campus locations – Kansas City and Joplin, Missouri – to address the growing health needs of both urban and rural populations. KCU's Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Biosciences and Dental Medicine offer graduate degree programs in osteopathic medicine, clinical psychology, biomedical sciences, dental medicine as well as multiple dual-degree opportunities.

THE CENTER FOR POPULATION HEALTH AND EQUITY MISSION

The CPHE builds momentum around understanding and addressing the social factors that impact health within and outside of the traditional health care setting, in partnership with local organizations, to better prepare students to practice osteopathic medicine, clinical psychology and dentistry while improving the well-being of the communities we serve.