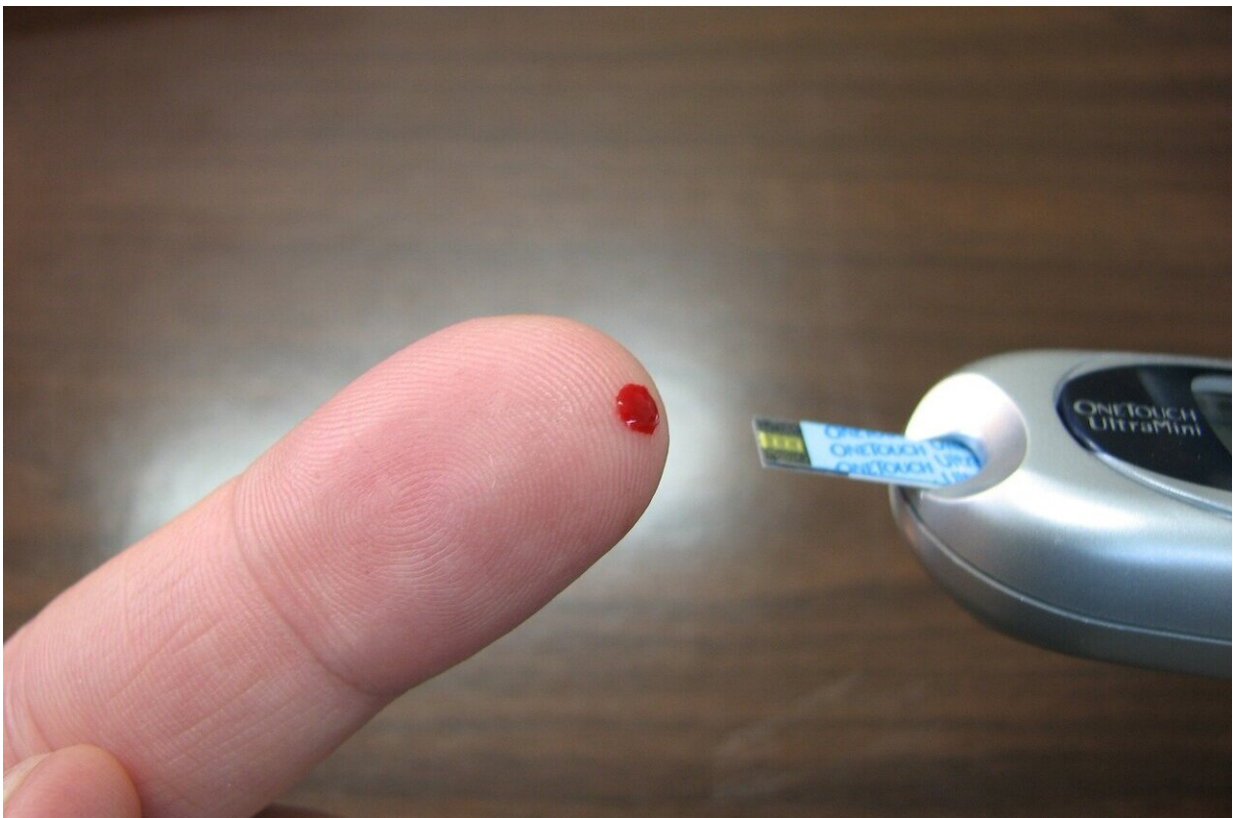


Major study of diabetes trends shows Americans' blood sugar control is getting worse

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Blood sugar control among adults with diabetes in the United States declined significantly in the past decade, according to a nationwide study

from researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The findings highlight the ongoing challenges of controlling one of the nation's most prevalent chronic health conditions.

The researchers, whose findings will appear online June 9 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, used data from an annual government-sponsored health study to analyze trends in blood sugar (or "glycemic") control, as well as [blood pressure](#) and cholesterol control among adults with diabetes.

They found that the proportion of adults with diabetes achieving [glycemic control](#) improved from 1999 through the next 10 years, but then declined significantly—dropping from 57.4 percent during 2007-2010 to 50.5 percent during 2015-2018. There was also drop in the proportion achieving blood pressure control, while the proportion achieving cholesterol control essentially leveled off.

"These are concerning findings. There has been a real decline in glycemic control from a decade ago, and overall, only a small proportion of people with diabetes are simultaneously meeting the key goals of glycemic control, blood pressure control, and control of high cholesterol," says study senior author Elizabeth Selvin, Ph.D., MPH, a professor in the Bloomberg School's Department of Epidemiology.

Diabetes mostly occurs in the form of type 2 diabetes which is strongly related to diet and lifestyle factors. The disease affects more than 34 million, or 13 percent, of the U.S. adult population, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and represents an ongoing public health crisis. By causing chronic high blood sugar and associated [high blood pressure](#) and high cholesterol, diabetes increases the risks of other serious diseases, especially cardiovascular disease and complications, including amputation and kidney disease. The traditional "ABCs" of diabetes care are to reduce chronic high blood sugar—usually

measured with the hemoglobin A1C test—to keep blood pressure below hypertensive levels, and to control [cholesterol levels](#).

For their study, Selvin and colleagues examined data from the U.S. government-supported National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which includes interviews and clinical exams of approximately 5,000 people across the U.S. annually, to analyze recent trends in whether adults with diabetes achieved treatment goals. Their sample consisted of 6,653 participants in the surveys from 1999 to 2018 who were at least 20 years old, not pregnant, and reported having been diagnosed with diabetes by a doctor, outside pregnancy.

Selvin and her team found that the percentage achieving glycemic control, defined as HbA1c levels below 7.0 percent, rose from 44.0 percent between 1999-2002 to 57.4 percent between 2007-2010. That figure then fell to 50.5 percent from 2015 to 2018.

Similarly, the percentage achieving blood pressure control (

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