

Abridged Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings of the 5-year follow-up study of 6,000 adults who participated in the original landmark Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle study (AusDiab) which was conducted in 1999-2000. That baseline study provided benchmark national data on the number of people with diabetes, obesity, hypertension (increased blood pressure) and kidney disease in Australia.

The second phase of AusDiab has determined how many new cases of these diseases are occurring each year, primarily as a result of people being physically inactive and eating more fat-rich foods.

Main findings

Approximately 275 adults in Australia develop diabetes every day (ie more than 100,000 annually). This represents 8 adults in every 1,000.

- More than 600 adults progress from being overweight to being obese every day (ie more than 200,000 annually).
- Every year, 3% of adults developed high blood pressure and almost 1% of adults developed chronic kidney disease manifested by a reduction in kidney function.

Stage 2 also found that:

On average, people under 65 gained 1.8 kg over five years and the average Australian waistline increased by 2.1 cm. This waistline increase was greater in females than in males for all age-groups.

- People with pre-diabetes were 10-20 times more likely to develop diabetes than were those with normal blood glucose levels.
- Obesity, hypertension, dyslipidemia*, physical inactivity and the metabolic syndrome** each increased the risk for developing diabetes.

- Obese people were 6 times more likely to develop the metabolic syndrome than were those of normal weight.
- People with diabetes were twice as likely to develop the metabolic syndrome, than those with normal blood glucose levels.
- The risk of developing the metabolic syndrome increased in physically inactive people and as people got older. Across all ages, and all weight and physical activity categories, males were at a higher risk of developing the metabolic syndrome than females.
- Over five years, people with previously known diabetes were twice as likely to die as people with normal glucose tolerance.
- Pre-diabetes was associated with a 45–55% increase in mortality risk over five years.
- People with previously known diabetes had a similar risk of mortality as smokers and those with previous cardiovascular disease.
- Over two-thirds of all cardiovascular disease deaths in the AusDiab cohort occurred in people with diabetes or prediabetes.

*Dyslipidemia is a condition characterised by high levels of blood fats (triglycerides) or low levels of 'good' cholesterol.

**The metabolic syndrome is a cluster of heart disease risk factors which include abdominal fat, high blood sugar levels (diabetes and prediabetes), high blood pressure, low levels of 'good' cholesterol (HDL), and high triglyceride levels.