

NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn Fights Rising Diabetes Rates in the Borough



The hospital's diabetes care team, including two glycemic nurse practitioners, aims to raise awareness among staff and patients that the disease can be prevented or controlled with dietary tweaks, exercise, and other lifestyle changes.

Diabetes affects more than 37 million Americans, with 500,000 adults in New York City living with the condition and an additional 200,000 unaware they have it. Brooklyn's overall diabetes rate is 10.5 percent—with some neighborhoods as high as 14.6 percent—compared to Manhattan's 7.1 percent, according to the New York State Department of Health.

Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for 95 percent of diabetes cases, is a chronic condition that occurs when blood sugar levels remain high, leading to complications

such as stroke, heart attack, and kidney disease.

Type 2 is more common in Brooklyn due to several factors, including that some lower-income communities have poorer diets. Diabetes rates are also higher among some of the borough's Black, Latino, and Asian populations.

The good news is that making small lifestyle changes, such as eating healthier and exercising more, can significantly lower the risk of developing the disease. While type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that cannot be prevented, type 2 diabetes can be managed, or even reversed, with the right interventions.

With additional hires during the last two years, NYU Langone Hospital—Brooklyn's diabetes care team now includes two glycemic nurse practitioners who specialize in managing patients with diabetes; seven clinical dietitians; and four doctors who are experts in treating diabetes—[Robert Aden, MD](#); [Bryan Blase, MD](#); [Dmitri Kirpichnikov, MD](#); and [Vladimir Privman, MD](#). Doubling down on a longtime goal, the team aims to increase awareness of diabetes prevention strategies among patients and staff to combat rising diabetes rates in the borough.

The two glycemic nurse practitioners, Kimesha Clarke and Alexandra Hanin, help patients control their blood sugar while they're hospitalized and educate them and their families on diabetes management upon discharge.

Clarke and Hanin's efforts also extend to educating hospital staff. In July 2024, they led a lunch and learn to teach nursing staff about lifestyle changes that can prevent diabetes. In September, they focused on nurses in the acute rehab unit, where many stroke patients also struggle with diabetes. "Improving diabetes control reduces the risk of a second stroke," Hanin says. "After taking that class, the nurses can pass on diabetes management information directly to their patients."

In November, Hanin, Clarke, and other providers answered questions from staff and community members at a Diabetes Awareness Month event at the hospital. Their goal for 2025 is to continue educating patients and staff on diabetes prevention strategies.

Kelly-Marie Andersen, a clinical dietitian, provides nutritional counseling to patients, teaching them to spot hidden sugars and make small tweaks to their diets to better manage blood sugar levels. "I meet patients where they are," she says, tailoring her advice to fit Brooklyn's diverse population. For example, many patients rely on rice as a staple food, so Andersen suggests using brown rice instead of white rice rather than cutting it out altogether.

The team also addresses the social determinants of health that affect diabetes patients. Andersen often recommends patients apply to be a part of the institution's program with [God's Love We Deliver](#), which delivers medically tailored meals to patients' homes. Brooklyn patients have received more than 76,000 meals through the program since August 2022. Since exercise is another factor in preventing diabetes, Andersen and other providers suggest patients aim for 150 minutes a week of physical activity and will recommend exercises to match patients' capabilities and limitations.

The diabetes care team also encourages patients to use continuous glucose monitors, small sensors that track blood sugar levels 24/7. The widely-used monitors—which are mostly covered by Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance—help patients visualize and understand, in real-time, how their blood sugar responds to everything they do, from what they eat and drink to how much they exercise to how their bodies respond to insulin and medications.

Andersen says she smiles when her patients start to understand their monitors' readings well. "They are excited to recite the most recent blood sugar levels after each meal," Andersen says. "Even if it's a little high, I say, 'We can work with that. Thanks for staying on top of it.'"

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