



Study: Diabetes Up, Poor Hardest Hit

BY ELIOT BROWN - Special to the Sun
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Despite considerable efforts by the city and the state to combat diabetes, hospitalization rates for the disease have grown precipitously in the five boroughs, especially in less wealthy neighborhoods, according to a new study by the city comptroller, William Thompson.

The report, released yesterday, also showed noticeable drops in childhood asthma hospitalizations, infant mortality, and death from heart disease during the last 15 years, with the reductions occurring across income groups.

Diabetes rates have been on the rise for more than a decade, consistently growing in lower income neighborhoods for every year between 2000 and 2005, according to the report. Hospitalization rates for diabetes jumped more than 30% for the poorest third of neighborhoods in the city between 1995 and 2005, with more than 1,800 New Yorkers dying of the disease in 2005. The wealthiest third of the city's neighborhoods saw diabetes hospitalization rates rise less than 15%. The increases mirror trends throughout the nation, health experts say, and come mainly as a result of rising instances of obesity.

"It's an uphill climb," the CEO of the New York State Health Foundation, James Knickman, said. "Diabetes is just the one chronic disease that is just increasing in prevalence."

City and state agencies have invested considerable resources in combating diabetes in recent years, targeting both health care providers and the general population to encourage a strategy aimed at reducing the prevalence of the disease. In July, the Bloomberg administration estimated that about 700,000 New Yorkers have the disease. Mr. Thompson recommended that the city expand its education campaigns and invest further in health centers aimed at treating diabetes.

On the positive side, the report showed childhood asthma hospitalization rates dropped by about 50% in the poorest third of city neighborhoods between 1995 and 2005, and infant mortality rates fell more than 30%.