Diabetes is…

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic diseases in children and adolescents; about 151,000 people below the age of 20 years have diabetes.

When diabetes strikes during childhood, it is routinely assumed to be type 1, or juvenile-onset diabetes. However, in the last 2 decades, type 2 diabetes (formerly known as adult-onset diabetes) has been reported among U.S. children and adolescents with increasing frequency. Also, studies conducted in Europe showed an increase in the frequency of type 1 diabetes, especially in young children. It is unclear whether the frequency of type 1 diabetes is also increasing among U.S. youth.

Each year, more than 13,000 young people are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.
Type 2 diabetes begins when the body develops a resistance to insulin and no longer uses the insulin properly. As the need for insulin rises, the pancreas gradually loses its ability to produce sufficient amounts of insulin to regulate blood sugar. Health care providers are finding more and more children with type 2 diabetes, a disease usually diagnosed in adults aged 40 years or older.

A statistically significant increase in the prevalence of type 2 diabetes among children and adolescents was found only for American Indians. The epidemics of obesity and the low level of physical activity among young people, as well as exposure to diabetes in utero, may be major contributors to the increase in type 2 diabetes during childhood and adolescence. Type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents already appears to be a sizable and growing problem among U.S. children and adolescents. Better physician awareness and monitoring of the disease's magnitude will be necessary. Standard case definition(s), guidelines for treatment, and approval of oral hypoglycemic agents (to lower blood sugar) are urgently required for children and adolescents. Children and adolescents diagnosed with type 2 diabetes are generally between 10 and 19 years old, obese, have a strong family history for type 2 diabetes, and have insulin resistance. Generally, children and adolescents with type 2 diabetes have poor glycemic control (A1C = 10% - 12%).

This information is from the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/projects/cda2.htm