



WORLD **DIABETES** FOUNDATION

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Facts about Diabetes

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- In 2007, more than 246 million people suffer from diabetes worldwide. WHO is warning of a diabetes epidemic, with this number expected to rise to 380 million in 2025 due to a combination of population ageing, unhealthy diets, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle. WHO predicts that developing countries will bear the brunt of the diabetes epidemic in the 21st century.
- Diabetes is an illness that occurs when the body lacks insulin either because the pancreas does not produce any insulin, or only a very small amount, or because the cells in the body are resistant towards the insulin produced in the body. The two conditions are in general referred to as type 1 and type 2 diabetes.
- Type 1 diabetes, also known as insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) or juvenile-onset diabetes, develops if the body produces too little insulin or none at all. This is caused by the destruction of insulin producing cells due to an immune reaction. It normally occurs at a younger age and people with type 1 diabetes rely on insulin injections for survival.
- Type 2 diabetes, also known as noninsulin dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) or adult-onset diabetes, refers to a state where a person's body is incapable of using the insulin produced mainly due to overweight. Up to 90% of all cases of diabetes are type 2. Type 2 diabetes usually appears in people over the age of 40, though can appear earlier than this (in South Asian and African-Caribbean people). The disease is occurring at an increasingly younger age, mainly due to overweight caused by changes in people's lifestyle such as unhealthy eating habits and lack of exercise.
- The symptoms of diabetes are typically extreme thirst, frequent passing of water and heavy weight loss over a short period. Other symptoms include tiredness, frequent infections, itching and rashes as well as disturbed vision. However, some people show none of these symptoms.
- Type 1 diabetes is treated with insulin in connection with diet. Type 2 diabetes can early after the onset of the disease often be treated with diet, exercise and medicine that help the body to use the insulin produced by the pancreas. As the disease gradually develops most patients will need insulin injections after some years. Due to the gradual nature of type 2 diabetes the number of undiagnosed people with diabetes is very high and the disease is often diagnosed when the person experiences side effects of the diabetes such as loss of vision or pain.
- Diabetes is an under-recognized and under-recorded cause of death. With modern



treatment, a person with diabetes can lead a normal and active life. However, when diabetes goes undetected, and consequently untreated, the likelihood of medical complications increases. Over time, high blood sugar levels can damage blood vessels, which can lead to heart disease, kidney failure, blindness, and, particularly in developing countries, foot infections, gangrene and amputation of the limbs.

Why does the body need insulin?

- When we eat, carbohydrates in our food are broken down into glucose. This is transported through the blood into the body's cells. Insulin, produced in the pancreas, works like a key to open the cells, so that the glucose can be absorbed and converted into energy. When people with diabetes eat, glucose builds up in their blood, which eventually spills over into the urine before leaving the body. People with type 1 diabetes therefore, have to have several insulin injections every day, ideally around meal-times, to force glucose to enter the cells, while people with type 2 diabetes either take medicine to increase their cells' insulin sensitivity or take insulin itself.

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The World Diabetes Foundation

The World Diabetes Foundation is dedicated to supporting prevention and treatment of diabetes in the developing world through funding of sustainable projects in education, capacity building, distribution and procurement of essential drugs and monitoring. The Foundation creates partnerships and acts as a catalyst to help others do more. The World Diabetes Foundation strives to educate and provide advocacy globally in an effort to create awareness, care and relief to those impacted by diabetes.

The World Diabetes Foundation was founded in March 2002 by Novo Nordisk. The founder has pledged to donate 500 million DKK (approx. 83 million USD) over a period of 10 years to the foundation. The Foundation is governed independently of Novo Nordisk by a 5 member board of directors, comprised of experts in the fields of diabetes and access to health in developing countries. The Foundation is registered in Denmark as an independent trust.

For further information about the World Diabetes Foundation and diabetes in the developing countries, please consult the Foundation's website at: www.worlddiabetesfoundation.org