



PAN-AFRICAN
MANAGED CARE

NATIONAL DIABETES MONTH

NOVEMBER 2022

National Diabetes Month

Diabetes is a chronic disease that occurs either when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas that transforms the glucose found in the food we eat into energy. Not being able to produce insulin or use it effectively leads to raised glucose levels in the blood.

FACT:

A healthy diet, regular physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight and avoiding tobacco use are ways to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.



Diabetes is one of leading causes of death in South Africa. The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) recently reported that there are 1.8 million South Africans with diabetes and estimates an additional undiagnosed population of 69% of the total number of diabetics. The African continent is expected to see the highest increase in diabetes globally by 2045. There's no such thing as "mild" diabetes. Diabetes is always serious. If it's left untreated or isn't managed well, the high levels of blood glucose associated with diabetes can slowly damage both the fine nerves and the small and large blood vessels in the body.





If you're over 35 and have any of the risk factors, you should be tested every year. A simple finger-prick test at your local pharmacy or clinic can diagnose the strong likelihood that you may have diabetes within a minute. You also need to know what the symptoms of diabetes are and whether you're at risk.

Symptoms of diabetes:

- Frequent urination,
- Excessive thirst,
- Increased hunger,
- Unusual weight loss,
- Tiredness,
- Lack of interest and concentration,
- Blurred vision,
- Frequent or recurring infections,
- Cuts and bruises that are slow to heal, boils and itching skin,
- Tingling and numbness in the hands or feet, and
- Vomiting and stomach pain (often mistaken as the flu).

If left untreated it can lead to a variety of complications, including:

- Heart disease
- Blindness
- Amputation
- Depression, anxiety, and distress
- Kidney disease (<https://idf.org/>) (<https://idf.org/>)
- Erectile dysfunction or impotence

The good news is that with careful management, these complications can be delayed and even prevented, but early diagnosis and going for regular blood glucose testing is very important.

Health impact

- Over time, diabetes can damage the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, and nerves.
- Adults with diabetes have a two- to three-fold increased risk of heart attacks and strokes.
- Combined with reduced blood flow, neuropathy (nerve damage) in the feet increases the chance of foot ulcers, infection, and eventual need for limb amputation.
- Diabetic retinopathy is an important cause of blindness and occurs because of long-term accumulated damage to the small blood vessels in the retina. Close to 1 million people are blind due to diabetes.
- Diabetes is among the leading causes of kidney failure.
- People with diabetes are more likely to have poor outcomes for several infectious diseases, including COVID-19.



Prevention

Lifestyle measures have been shown to be effective in preventing or delaying the onset of type 2 diabetes. To help prevent type 2 diabetes and its complications, people should:

- Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight;
- Be physically active – doing at least 30 minutes of regular, moderate-intensity activity on most days. More activity is required for weight control;
- Eat a healthy diet, avoiding sugar and saturated fats; and
- Avoid tobacco use – smoking increases the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.



References

1. <https://www.diabetesatlas.org/>.
2. [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/diabetes#:~:text=Global%20Burden%20of%20Disease%20Collaborative%20Network.%20Global%20Burden%20of%20Disease%20Study%202019.%20Results.%20Institute%20for%20Health%20Metrics%20and%20Evaluation.%202020%20\(https%3A//vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd%2Dresults/\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/diabetes#:~:text=Global%20Burden%20of%20Disease%20Collaborative%20Network.%20Global%20Burden%20of%20Disease%20Study%202019.%20Results.%20Institute%20for%20Health%20Metrics%20and%20Evaluation.%202020%20(https%3A//vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd%2Dresults/).).
3. Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global Burden of Disease Study 2019. Results. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. 2020 (<https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results/>).