About 56 million people – 8.5% of the adult population - in the European region are estimated to have diabetes in 2013 and if no action is taken to stop the epidemic the number is estimated to reach 69 million in 2035. An estimated 619,000 deaths are attributable to diabetes, equivalent to 1 in 10 deaths in adults. At least US$147 billion were spent on diabetes healthcare in the European Region in 2013.

What causes the epidemic?
Modifiable risk factors such as obesity, physical inactivity, psychosocial factors and socioeconomic deprivation could be tackled to reduce incidence of type 2 diabetes in Europe. Research suggests that for persons in the lowest-income category the risk for developing type 2 diabetes is more than triple when compared to people in the highest-income group.

Reasons include:
• Ageing population
• Limited access to healthy food
  ➢ large distances to the nearest retail food store (means of 1.4 km or greater)
  ➢ no access to fresh Fruit and vegetables within walking distance (radius of 1 km).
• Food choice is influenced by norms and values of the society
  ➢ more and more meals consumed outside home
• Sedentary life-style among inhabitants of poor neighbourhoods
  ➢ Increased violence associated with poverty prevents people to engage in outdoor physical activity
  ➢ Parks and sport facilities are less available in the areas

Five strategies
1. Increase access to healthy foods
   Reducing salt, sugar, and saturated fats, and eliminate industrially produced trans-fats in food, as well as restrict marketing of unhealthy foods to children.
2. Increase physical activity
   Encourage health-promoting environments through urban planning, active transport, and work-site healthy lifestyle programmes.
3. Improve access to medications and supplies, improve screening, care and education
4. Increase community services to assist lower-income groups prevent and treat diabetes
   Provide education by skilled professionals on prevention and care for diabetes.
5. Take a life course approach to prevention
   Include diabetes and diabetes awareness in reproductive, maternal and child health programmes as well as in public health programmes using a multi-sectoral approach to addressing diabetes in a range of policies

References