



With 1 in 9 adults living with diabetes, South Africa has highest diabetes prevalence in Africa

New figures released by the International Diabetes Federation show that over 4 million adults in the country affected by the condition.

Just under half of people living with diabetes in South Africa are undiagnosed

One in three adults in South Africa are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes

12 November, 2021 - Ahead of World Diabetes Day, the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) has released new figures showing that 537 million adults are now living with diabetes worldwide — a rise of 16% (74 million) since the previous IDF estimates in 2019. These findings from the 10th Edition of the IDF Diabetes Atlas, which will be published on December 6th, report that 4.2 million adults in South Africa are living with diabetes – one in nine adults.

The diabetes prevalence in South Africa has reached 11.3%, the highest in Africa. The country will also register an estimated 96,000 deaths due to diabetes in 2021, while the cost of diabetes-related health expenditure has risen to 1,700 USD per person, totalling an estimated 7.2 billion USD.

Just under half (45.4%) of people living with diabetes in South Africa are undiagnosed. When diabetes is undetected or inadequately treated, people with diabetes are at risk of serious and life-threatening complications, such as heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and lower-limb amputation. These result in reduced quality of life and higher healthcare costs, and lead to a greater need for access to care.

One in three (13 million) adults in South Africa have impaired fasting glucose (IFG), which places them at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. This is the highest IFG prevalence in the world.

“Diabetes is a serious threat to global health that respects neither socioeconomic status nor national boundaries. The increasing prevalence of diabetes in South Africa confirms diabetes is a significant challenge to the health and wellbeing of individuals and families in the country,” says Professor Ayesha Motala, Professor and Head Department of Diabetes and Endocrinology School of Clinical Medicine, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

This year marks 100 years since the discovery of insulin. This milestone presents a unique opportunity to reflect on the numbers of people living with diabetes, as well as the urgent need to improve access to care for the millions affected.

“We must do more to provide affordable and uninterrupted access to diabetes care for all people who require it in South Africa, and around the world. Much can be done to reduce the impact of diabetes. We have evidence that type 2 diabetes can often be prevented, while early diagnosis and access to appropriate care for all types of diabetes can avoid or delay complications in people living with the condition. Therefore we must do more to prevent type 2 diabetes, diagnose all forms of diabetes early and prevent complications. Importantly we must ensure that every person with diabetes has uninterrupted access to the quality care they need in their communities,” concludes Motala.

Globally, 90% of people with diabetes have type 2 diabetes. The rise in the number of people with type 2 diabetes is driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic, demographic, environmental and genetic factors. Key contributors include urbanisation, an ageing population, decreasing levels of physical activity and increasing levels of people being overweight and developing obesity.

Key global and regional findings from the IDF Diabetes Atlas 10th Edition include:



- One in ten (10.5%) adults around the world are currently living with diabetes. The total number is predicted to rise to 643 million (11.3%) by 2030 and to 783 million (12.2%) by 2045.
- 1 in 22 (24 million) adults in Africa are living with diabetes.
- An estimated 240 million people are living with undiagnosed diabetes worldwide – 13 million in Africa.
- Diabetes was responsible for an estimated USD 966 billion in global health expenditure in 2021. This represents a 316% increase over 15 years. Africa accounts for 1% (13 billion USD) of the global expenditure.
- Excluding the mortality risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 6.7 million adults are estimated to have died as a result of diabetes, or its complications, in 2021. That's more than one in ten (12.2%) of global deaths from all causes.
- The Africa Region accounts for 6% (416,000) of total diabetes-related deaths. 541 million adults, or 10.6% of adults worldwide, have impaired glucose tolerance (IGT), placing them at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Almost one in ten (52 million) people affected by IGT live in the Africa Region.

More information and supporting data about the national, regional and global prevalence of diabetes from the IDF Diabetes Atlas 10th Edition can be found at www.diabetesatlas.org.

The theme of World Diabetes Day this 14 November is **Access to Diabetes Care**. IDF is calling on national governments to provide the best possible care for people living with diabetes and develop policies to improve diabetes screening and type 2 diabetes prevention, especially among young people. Learn more at www.worlddiabetesday.org.

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About the IDF Diabetes Atlas

The IDF Diabetes Atlas is an authoritative resource on the global impact of diabetes. First published in 2000, it is updated periodically by IDF in collaboration with experts from around the world and contains data on diabetes prevalence, mortality and expenditure on global, regional and national levels. The IDF Diabetes Atlas draws attention to the importance and growing impact of diabetes in all countries and IDF Regions. www.diabetesatlas.org

About the International Diabetes Federation

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) is an umbrella organisation of over 230 national diabetes associations in 170 countries and territories. It represents the interests of the growing number of people with diabetes and those at risk. The Federation has been leading the global diabetes community since 1950. www.idf.org

About World Diabetes Day

World Diabetes Day was created in 1991 by IDF and the World Health Organization in response to growing concerns about the escalating health threat posed by diabetes. World Diabetes Day became an official United Nations Day in 2006 with the passage of United Nation Resolution 61/225. It is marked every year on 14 November, the birthday of Sir Frederick Banting, who co-discovered insulin along with Charles Best in 1922. The World Diabetes Day 2021 campaign is supported by Allergan, AstraZeneca, Gan & Lee, Lilly Diabetes, Merck, Novo Nordisk, Pfizer/MSD Alliance and Sanofi.