

Diabetes: The ticking time bomb for India

By IAS Toppers | 2023-10-10 14:00:00



Introduction

- As of June 2023, **11.4%** of India's population, translating to **over 100 million individuals** aged 20 and above, are grappling with diabetes.
- Additionally, another **136 million (15.3%)** are on the brink, of being pre-diabetic.
- The obesity concern is equally alarming with **28.6%** of Indians falling under the obese category based on **Body Mass Index (BMI)** metrics.

What factors contribute to the prevalence of diabetes in India?

Dietary causes:

- The surge in diabetes cases is largely attributed to the **rampant consumption** of ultra-processed foods and beverages.
- These include carbonated **drinks**, **instant cereals**, and a **plethora of fast foods** ranging from pizzas to sweetened yogurts.

- Research underscores the peril of diets laden with [ultra-processed foods](#) or those high in sugar, fat, and salt.
- **10%** daily uptick in such food consumption can spike the **risk of type-2 diabetes** in adults by **15%**.

Lifestyle Changes:

- Rapid urbanization increased '[westernization](#)', and the shift towards sedentary lifestyles have contributed to the rise in diabetes cases in India.
- The availability of machines and decreased **physical activity, coupled with stress**, play a significant role.

Physical Inactivity:

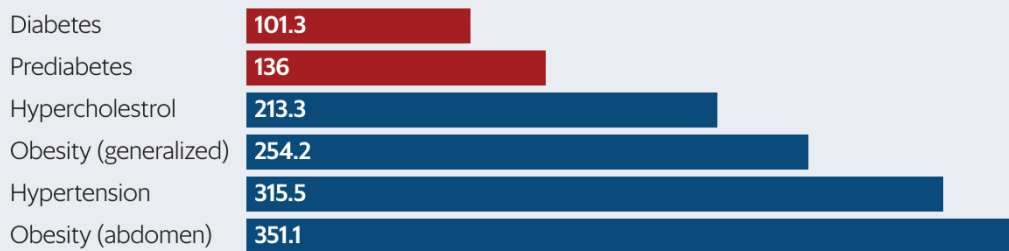
- A study by ICMR highlighted the **sedentary nature of Indian adults**, with men being physically active for close to **two hours a day**, while women spent just about **52 minutes**.

Financial Strain:

- The overall **diabetes and prediabetes care market** in India is projected to soar to about **\$60 billion** by 2030, up from **\$17 billion** in 2020-21.
- On average, a type-2 diabetes patient in India incurs an annual expense of **₹11,000**, with medications accounting for **55%** of this cost.

Lifestyle diseases rising rapidly, numbers higher than previously thought

Projected number of Indians (age 20 and above) suffering with metabolic non-communicable diseases in India, 2021 (in millions)



Study was conducted on 113,043 adults (79,506: rural, 33,537: urban) aged 20 years and older across 28 states and three UTs, between October 2008 and December 2020.

Chart: Nandita Venkatesan • Source: ICMR-India Diabetes (ICMR-INDIAB) study



[Ref- Mint]

Global Trends and Role of Food Industry in India

- While high-income nations witness a **dip in sugar-sweetened beverage sales**, companies are redirecting their focus to countries like **India**.

- The younger generation and the burgeoning **middle class are prime targets**.
- From cartoon characters to celebrity endorsements, the tactics are manifold, leading to **skewed consumption choices**.

Which Policy and Regulatory measures are required to curb diabetes?

- **Regulation Need:** Amidst the health crisis, there's a pressing need to clamp down on the marketing of unhealthy edibles by **ordinance (under Article 123 of the Constitution)** or **supervised regulatory provisions**.
- **Industry Resistance:** The food industry, while resisting such regulations, offers partnership baits, often underplaying the health crisis and overstating economic benefits.
- **Regulatory Lapses:** The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's response has been tepid, with the food industry wielding significant influence.
- **Legal Safeguards:** To shield the populace from the food industry's manipulative tactics, a robust legal framework is imperative.
 - This could encompass defining 'healthy food', mandating **warning labels**, and curbing **promotional tactics** for unhealthy products.

Conclusion

Similar actions have recently been taken by the governments of South Africa, Norway, and Mexico. The Indian government can demonstrate its strength by regulating food labelling and marketing. A law of this nature will be a clear demonstration of the government's will. The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods Act stifled commercial baby food growth. The proposed new law could have a similar effect on unhealthy foods and beverages. This is a thought whose time has come.

IT's Input

What is Diabetes?

- Diabetes is a **medical condition** caused due to **insufficient production and secretion of insulin** from the pancreas in case of **Type-1 diabetes** and defective response of insulin for **Type-2 diabetes**.
- Under **normal body circumstances**, blood glucose levels are tightly controlled by insulin, a **hormone produced by the pancreas**, that lowers the blood glucose level.
- When the blood glucose elevates, **insulin is released** from pancreas to normalize the glucose level.
- In patients with diabetes, the **absence or insufficient production** of insulin causes **hyperglycemi**

Feature	Type 1 Diabetes	Type 2 Diabetes
Definition	An autoimmune disorder where the immune system destroys insulin-	Metabolic disorder charact insulin resistance or inadec

Age of Onset	producing beta cells in the pancreas. Typically diagnosed in children and young adults.	production. Often diagnosed in adults, can occur at any age.
Causes	Unknown, possibly genetic and environmental factors.	Strongly linked to genetics and lifestyle factors.
Symptoms	Frequent urination, excessive thirst, weight loss, fatigue, and blurred vision.	Often asymptomatic or have symptoms initially.
Risk Factors	Family history of Type 1 diabetes, genetics.	Family history of Type 2 diabetes, obesity, inactivity, poor diet.
Prevention	No known prevention.	Can often be prevented or delayed through lifestyle changes.