

Diabetes in the 21st Century

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What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disorder which occurs when the body is unable to produce enough insulin, or use it effectively. Its main clinical feature is an abnormally high level of sugar (glucose) in the blood

Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas that allows glucose from the food we eat to enter each and

A hormone is a substance secreted from an endocrine gland, carried by the bloodstream to a distant part of the body to cause a change in function or structure.

every cell in the body. Glucose itself is converted within the cells to supply energy, which is essential for all body tissues, such as muscles, to work properly. As a result, a person with diabetes does not absorb glucose properly, and glucose stays circulating in the blood, where it can reach high, even toxic, concentrations

(hyperglycaemia). If very high levels of glucose develop, these may spill over into the urine via the kidneys. These high levels damage tissues and organs over time, and will inevitably leading to complications like blindness, kidney failure, nerve problems and even gangrene in the feet.

The changing face of diabetes in South Africa

As many as one adult in four South African now has diabetes, or is well on the way to getting it. This

Diabetes is on the increase – not just here, but all around the world. It is the fastest growing chronic disease of lifestyle.

means that more than 1.5 million South Africans are diabetic, but worryingly, most of those are not even aware of it – or of the serious complications that can arise if it is not treated properly.

Why is diabetes on the increase?

Tibb is firmly convinced that the Western way of life is largely responsible for the alarming increase in the incidence of diabetes, which has become obvious over the last 10 years or so. It is a prime example of a chronic ailment brought on by a dysfunctional lifestyle, often aggravated by risky, unwise personal behaviour like smoking and excessive drinking. Many adolescents and adults, not only in the developed world, regularly



consume soft drinks laden with sugar, especially fructose syrup, plenty of red and processed meats, and fat-rich dairy products. The inevitable result is the rapid increase within a generation or two in the number of people who are excessively overweight and who lead sedentary lifestyles.

The financial and social burdens arising from treating diabetic people are enormous.

To make matters worse, the time spent on physical activities and exercise has been diminishing for years. A sedentary, screen-dominated, couch-potato style of existence is replacing traditional physical activities like walking, cycling and swimming, particularly in the young. Obesity, not unexpectedly, is increasing alarmingly. We now know that as many as ninety percent of diabetics are seriously overweight. *Diabetes goes hand-in-hand with obesity.*

Types of diabetes

There are two main types of diabetes:

Type 1 – Insulin dependent diabetes

It occurs in someone whose pancreas is unable to produce insulin at the required rate. It may be, because specific cells within the pancreas are damaged or destroyed. People with this form need to take insulin by daily injections subcutaneously or into the muscle in order to control blood glucose levels. This form is usually more severe than type 2 diabetes (*below*).

Type 2 – Non-Insulin dependent diabetes

This form affects more than 90% of diabetics and is by far the most common. It usually occurs in adults, but is increasingly seen in children and adolescents. In the type 2 form, the body is able to produce insulin, but it is either not sufficient or the body does not responding to its effects. This leads to a build-up of glucose in the blood.

The number of people with type 2 diabetes is increasing dramatically. It usually arises from a poor lifestyle, especially regarding diet, exercise and quality of sleep. Women who become diabetic during pregnancy often go on to develop type 2 diabetes in later life.

Signs and symptoms of diabetes

These were first described by Hippocrates, the father of medicine and pioneer of Tibb, back in Ancient Greek times.

The main **symptoms** are:

- *An abnormal or raging thirst, with very dry mouth*
- *Excessive production of urine*
- *Sudden loss of weight, despite increased appetite*
- *Constant fatigue, tiredness*
- *Poor, slow wound healing*

- *Recurring infections, difficult to clear*
- *Blurred vision*

The main **signs** are:

- *Abnormally high levels of glucose in the blood*
- *Appearance of glucose in the urine, if blood glucose is high*

Complications of diabetes

The build-up of sugar in the person's blood sooner or later leads to a whole host of medical complications. These appear if the diabetes is not treated properly in good time.

The main **complications** are:

- *Kidney damage (nephropathy)*
- *Nerve damage (neuropathy) causing tingling and pain*
- *Deteriorating vision, maybe leading to blindness*
- *Foot ulcers requiring amputation due to poor circulation*
- *Sexual impotence*
- *Skin infections, with persistent itching*
- *Increased risk of heart attacks and strokes*
- *Mental disturbances – irritability and confusion*

The personal cost of diabetes is that the Quality of Life will inevitably deteriorate, often rapidly, due to the appearance of serious complications. About eighty percent of

Fortunately, the type 2 form especially is preventable and reversible in most cases by simple, inexpensive changes to the sufferer's lifestyle and personal behaviour, supported by Physis-enhancing herbal products.

people with diabetes will die of heart disease or stroke. For people with type 2 diabetes, life expectancy is shortened by 5 to 10 years. Adults with diabetes are twice as likely to die prematurely, compared to people without diabetes.

Tibb and the cause of type 2 diabetes

For increasing numbers of South Africans, their lifestyles are becoming increasingly sedentary, with reducing levels of everyday physical activity and avoidance of formal physical exercise. Furthermore, the general availability of affordable calorie-rich food has led to a rapid rise in the number of overweight and even obese people.

There are a number of risk factors for someone developing type 2 diabetes. They include:

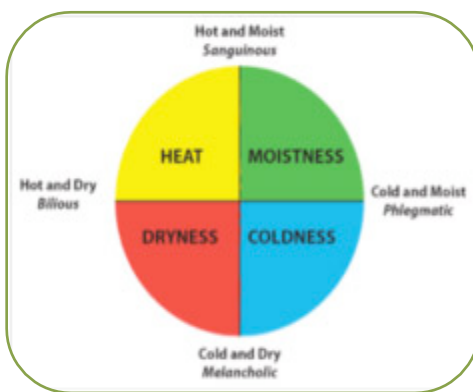
- *Being obese or moderately overweight*
- *Lack of regular physical exercise or activity*
- *Consuming the wrong sort of foods, especially those which are carbohydrate- rich*
- *Genetic pre-disposition*

The net effect of these risk factors is that the quality of moistness in the body is increased

The Tibb approach to type 2 diabetes

For Tibb diabetes reflects a basic imbalance in the person's *qualities* of moistness and heat. Heat is needed for the pancreas to function well. Excessive moistness dampens heat and results in insufficient production of insulin. Excessive moistness may also affect the tissue cells' sensitivity to insulin, resulting in increased levels of glucose circulating in the blood stream.

Tibb sees the increase in blood sugar in diabetes, especially type 2, as the outcome of disturbed inner harmony involving hormones like insulin, leptin and other agents which regulate sugar and other carbohydrates. The person's "inner doctor", or *Physis*, has been so severely disturbed by an abnormal lifestyle, especially regarding food consumed and physical activity over the long-term, that the person's



internal harmony, or *homeostasis*, is truly upset Tibb regards type 2 diabetes, and many other chronic disorders, as a major disease of lifestyle.

Individuals with a *sanguinous* dominant/sub-dominant temperament are most likely to develop diabetes. This is due to the innate qualities of *moistness* associated with this temperamental type and their predisposition to overeating. A person with a sanguinous/phlegmatic temperament is at even greater risk of developing diabetes, due to

the dominance of moistness in this combination type.

Tibb and the treatment of diabetes

Treatment is aimed at *reducing the excess moistness* associated with diabetes, by implementing Tibb Lifestyle Factors that will *increase the qualities of heat and dryness*.

Lifestyle advice includes decreasing the intake of carbohydrate-rich foods and increasing levels of physical activity. This will decrease the level of moistness produced in the body and increase heat, which is needed for the proper functioning of the pancreas. This assists *Physis* in addressing both the symptoms and the causes of type 2 diabetes.

The main objective in the Tibb treatment of diabetes, as with all chronic or persistent disorders, is adopting a sound, suitable lifestyle, especially regarding food and drink. *However, this will only happen if the person with diabetes takes control for his or her own health.* Success in reversing or eliminating diabetes ultimately lies with the person affected.

Avoid:

- **Snacks with high salt or sugar content**
- **Fried, oily and carbo-loaded foods**
- **Processed foods or ready meals**
- **Canned, fizzy or 'energy' drinks**
- **Margarine made from hydrogenated fats**
- **Meals heavy with starch – bread, rice, pasta, white flour pasties**

Food and drink

Most cases of diabetes are closely linked to being overweight and not taking enough exercise. So reducing the intake of energy-rich sweetened foods is a priority.

Some Tibb guidelines:

- Select foods which are predominantly **Hot & Dry** – e.g., chicken, fish, eggs, green peppers, avocados, grapes, and use garlic, fenugreek and cinnamon liberally. Foods which are **Cold & Dry** can be eaten sparingly: e.g., beef, tripe, cabbage, cauliflower, mielie meal, and soured milk.
- Cut down foods which are **Cold & Moist** –e.g., butternut, rice, carrots and butter. Avoid foods which are **Hot & Moist** – e.g., liver, bread, pasta, wheat cereals, chocolate, bananas, and olives
- Increase the intake of dietary fibre, as this prevents surges in blood sugar levels.

Physical activity and exercise

Any changes to the daily diet are unlikely to be successful unless they are supported by a plan to increase

Exercise has an insulin-like effect on the body. Start with 10 minutes per day of cardiovascular exercises such as walking, running, cycling, or swimming. Gradually build up to 45-60 minutes at least three times a week.

physical activity and do more exercise. It has been shown time and again that regular, non-strenuous physical activity not only delays, but even prevents, diabetes. As a bonus it improves other ailments that co-exist with diabetes – raised blood pressure, cholesterol problems and poor blood circulation.

Physical activity carried out of doors, especially in South Africa, increases a person's exposure to sunlight. This we now know shows promise in preventing and treating diabetes – a daily short walk in the sunshine confers multiple benefits.

Personal habits

The following advice on habits for diabetes sufferers is recommended, where applicable:

- **Improve foot hygiene.** For example, massage them regularly with heating oil, and keep them clean and dry. This reduces the chance of ulcer formation and infection by microbes.
- **Reduce meal size.** For example, eat five or more smaller meals, rather than two or three large ones. Snacks between meals are OK.
- **Snack sensibly.** Small portions of fresh fruit, vegetables, natural yogurt, biltong and popcorn are ideal.
- **Cut down alcohol consumption.** This will reduce 'empty calorie' intake.
- **Avoid cold, chilled foods.** These aggravate the underlying imbalance in qualities.

- **Cut down drinking during meals.** This will improve digestion markedly. Drink warm, still water well before a meal, and shortly afterwards.
- **Relieve emotional stress.** This will support Physis in dealing with imbalance in qualities. Try the Tibb breathing exercises, counselling or meditation.
- **Cut down, or give up, smoking.** This general health advice will also support Physis in its harmony-restoring activities.

Herbal therapy

Apart from lifestyle changes, a whole range of traditional herbs and spices, used effectively over the

Cinnamon (1 tsp, added to meals) helps the body use its own insulin more efficiently. Cloves and turmeric are also effective insulin boosters.

centuries, can be brought into the food and drink equation. Ginger, cinnamon, turmeric and fenugreek, for example, have all proven effective, because of their heating qualities.

Combined approach. Natural-based therapies can often be combined with conventional medicine. Tibb can be used as supportive treatment when conventional drugs, such as metformin, are used. If this approach is adopted, however, the healthcare practitioner should be consulted regarding possible interactions.

Lifestyle changes, as advocated by Tibb, will benefit most people living with diabetes. As the main culprits in most cases are unwise eating habits and a lack of regular physical activity, these can be readily addressed by simple dietary changes, an increase in daily physical activities, and the use of specific herbs.

Further information

Information on diabetes: www.tibb.co.za/research_reviews.html

Tibb recommended diet charts: www.tibb.co.za/food.html

More information on Tibb and its principles: www.tibb.co.za/concepts_tibb.html;

For recipes suitable for diabetics: "Cooking for your body type" (free download): www.tibb.co.za/Cookbook.pdf

Practical advice for diabetes sufferers: www.tibb.co.za/ailments.html

For information on Tibb products visit: www.tibbherbals.com/