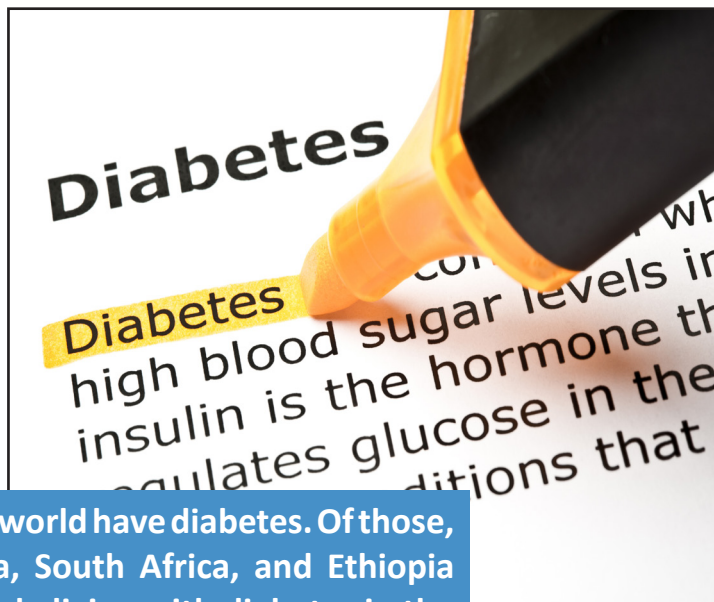


# Diabetes



An estimated 387 million people in the world have diabetes. Of those, 22 million are in Africa, with Nigeria, South Africa, and Ethiopia having the highest percentage of people living with diabetes in the continent, according to the International Diabetes Federation.

The IDF further estimates that Africa will be the continent in which diabetes will increase the most. They project a 55% increase by 2035 which will equal 592 million people in the world living with diabetes.

## The causes of diabetes

There are three different kinds of diabetes, each with their own causes and treatments. Most people who are diagnosed get type 2 diabetes. However, they all affect the way that sugar and insulin work in the body. Normally, the pancreas releases a hormone called insulin which allows glucose, a sugar, into the cells from the blood.

Glucose is the main source of energy for cells and comes from food and the liver. As insulin allows glucose into the cells, blood sugar levels drop and the amount of insulin released drops. This action is affected by diabetes.

**Type 1 diabetes:** This is when immune cells which normally fight disease, attack and destroy the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. This leaves the body with little or no insulin to help the glucose into the cells. Sugar builds up in the bloodstream and causes complications like kidney problems.

It is thought to be caused by genetic and

environmental factors, although it is not clearly understood.

**Type 2 diabetes:** This is caused when cells become resistant to insulin. The pancreas may not be able to make enough insulin to overcome the resistance and sugar builds up in the bloodstream. Causes are not fully understood but genetic and environmental factors are suspected. Being overweight is linked to type 2 diabetes but not all people with type 2 diabetes are overweight.

**Gestational diabetes:** During pregnancy, hormones released increase resistance to insulin. If the pancreas cannot make enough insulin to compensate, it can cause a temporary condition called gestational diabetes.

## Diabetes and lifestyle

The main symptoms of diabetes is significantly increased thirst, needing to urinate more often than usual, and increased hunger. If you have these signs it is very important to get your sugar levels tested for diabetes.

Diabetes is a treatable condition and with the right medical care, people can live a long and healthy life. Depending on the type of diabetes and the severity, treatment may include blood sugar monitoring, insulin, and oral medications.