



Glucose Nation

Fact: The GCC region has some of the highest rates of diabetes in the world. This comes as no surprise to many of us, since awareness of the problem is high. So why do statistics show that incidence rates are not declining—or even stabilising—but actually predicted for an increase?

By Yi-Hwa Hanna

In a region where you can order fast food on speed-dial to your door at pretty much any hour of the day (or night), where it's become somewhat of a norm for many to take a taxi for a two-minute drive (that would have taken about seven minutes to walk), and decadence and excess are often celebrated, it's hardly surprising that steering clear of temptations that can lead to the onset of diabetes isn't easy.

It's this sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy dietary habits that are often cited as the main causes behind the high rates of type 2 diabetes in the GCC, and with children as young as six years old now being diagnosed with the disease, doctors in the UAE are describing it as a national health emergency. Recent figures from the International Diabetes Foundation show that one in 10 people in the Gulf States is

living with the disease, and scarily, that's not counting the potentially thousands of undiagnosed cases. Experts have warned that many patients don't come in for a diagnosis until a later stage, whether it's because they don't recognise the symptoms or simply overlook the gravity of the situation—a worrying trend, especially considering early detection is key for managing the disease. Reports

Healthy Dose

predict that the number of cases is expected to increase from 36.8 million people today to a whopping 67.9 million by 2035—that's more than 80%—placing the Middle East and North Africa region among the world's fastest growing regions for the disease. But it isn't all bad news: The IDF also estimates that more than 70% of cases of type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed by adopting a healthier lifestyle. Increased awareness is the first step—and putting it into practise, of course, comes next. With governments in the region opening up more public facilities in which to exercise, from running tracks to cycling paths, new gyms springing up in every area, and restaurants starting to offer healthier, lighter options, all we have to do is take it one step at a time—and we're here to help.

THIS WEEK

Set Your Intention

► As new-age as it sounds, research has shown that goal-setting can make a marked difference in our ability to make achievements—especially when we actually write them down. And it's not just for our fitness, health or nutritional aims—it works for life goals too. A study conducted on the 1979 Harvard MBA programme found that the three percent of participants who had written their goals down were earning up to 10 times as much as the remaining 97 percent of the class combined. But write them down for yourself, rather than announcing them to everyone on your Instagram network—various studies carried out over the past eight decades have found that announcing your plans to others could actually backfire, since doing so can trick you into feeling you've accomplished enough by making the announcement and don't really need to follow through by working hard.

Cut back on sugar

► While this is a fairly straightforward step in reducing diabetes risk, it's not as easy as just ordering less dessert. The pesky sweet stuff can sneak up on us in more subtle and frequent ways than we realise, first and foremost in the drinks we consume. Cutting out soft drinks may be an obvious choice, but trying to take less sugar in our tea and coffee (or going without) can have more impact than we realise. In addition to trying to sweeten your hot drinks less, why not try replacing a couple of your daily cuppas with a tall glass of water instead for a double-bonus? If it's the taste you crave, try flavouring your water with fresh fruit. VOSS is one brand that's leading the fruit-infusion revolution—we

like popping fresh cucumbers and raspberries into one of their beautiful glass bottles for water that's just as pretty as it is tasty.

Get More ZZZs

► A recent study by the University of Bristol in the UK and Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar found that not getting enough sleep—especially on weekdays—can increase our risk of developing both obesity and type 2 diabetes. Findings showed that even if you “make up” for sleepless weeknights with weekend lie-ins, it's the inevitable build-up of “sleep debt” that's the real problem. It's for this same reason that a previous study published in *Science Translational Medicine* found that shift workers—who

typically have out-of-sync body clocks and disruptive sleep schedules thanks to their unpredictable schedules—have a higher risk of both diabetes and obesity, with the lifestyle's side-effects sometimes putting them into a pre-diabetic state. Researchers from Weill Cornell claim that even 30 minutes of sleep debt a day can significantly affect our insulin resistance, and the risk doesn't stop there—chronic sleep deprivation has also been linked to memory and cognitive impairment, stress, heart problems, stroke, and psychiatric problems. The bottom line? Go to bed a little earlier tonight. Investing in some quality bedding is a good way to tempt yourself into clocking in to your sheets





early—we love IKEA's Memory Foam Mattress Toppers for their ability to truly transform a mattress into a wonderland of comfort, and PerDormire's Lattice Pillow for ensuring both your head and neck are properly supported while you get your shut-eye.

THIS MONTH
Get Moving

► Exercise, exercise, exercise. We can't say it enough. One of the most effective ways of preventing the onset of type 2 diabetes is making sure you get in enough exercise each week, whether it's aerobic or resistance-based, as it helps to control blood sugar regulation, metabolise fat, and build stronger muscle fibres that are more responsive to insulin. Grab your favourite trainers and schedule in an extra workout—be it a run, weight-lifting session, pole fitness class or swim—this week.

Turn Off The TV

► Not only does sitting in front of the telly for hours on end lead to more mindless snacking—and increase our chances of munching on less healthy foods—various studies have found that all that sitting can shorten our life, expand

our waistlines, and even lead to more brittle bones. In fact, even if you're an avid exerciser, studies show sitting down for long periods can lead to increased risk of heart disease, cancer and—you guessed it—diabetes. Of course, we're not saying that you have to give up your weekly fix of *Game of Thrones*, but try to get up and move between episodes or during ad breaks, and don't spend every night or weekend snuggled up with a box set.

Start Roughing It

► No, we don't mean you need to give up your home comforts, or even introduce a little more *50 Shades*-esque activity into your life—we just mean add some more fibre to your diet. Harvard researchers have linked a high-fibre diet—particularly cereal fibre—as well as high-glycaemic index foods to a lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Some of our favourite high-fibre natural foods include mushrooms, leafy greens, broccoli, beans, flax seeds, and chia seeds.

Embrace (Good) Fat

► Fat often gets a bad rap. While trans fats should be avoided wherever possible,

good fats such as the monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats found in nuts, seeds and vegetable oils like avocado can help to stave it off. An excuse to load up on guacamole? Yes please.

Go For The (Whole) Grain

► Whole grains are not only another great source of fibre, they're also a good way to keep your blood sugar steady. Thanks to the bran and fibre in whole grains, it's tougher for digestive enzymes to break starches down into glucose, which means blood sugar and insulin rise more slowly and steadily, putting less stress on the body. They're also rich in essential vitamins and minerals. White, processed grains that possess a high glycaemic index, however, have the opposite effect—a study in China found that women whose diets had the highest GI also had a 21 percent higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Scale back on red and processed meat

► Findings from more than six long-term studies discovered that eating just one daily 3-ounce serving of red meat

can increase our risk of diabetes by 20 percent. Processed meats had even more impact, with two slices of bacon or one hot-dog leading to a 51 percent risk increase. Why not try swapping out half your typical red meat intake for lean poultry or mushrooms (see p.24 to find out why!), or sources of protein that serve up other benefits, such as fish or quinoa?

THIS YEAR
Quit smoking

► We don't even need to tell you why smoking is bad for you—but research published in *The Journal of The American Medical Association* suggests that active smoking could be independently associated with glucose intolerance, impaired fasting glucose, and type 2 diabetes, with smokers said to be at a 50 percent higher risk of developing the disease.

Watch Your Waistline

► The most common culprit for many health issues, carrying excess weight can prevent the body from using its own insulin effectively, with the development of insulin resistance and persistently high blood sugar levels leading to an increased diabetes risk. In fact, studies have found that being overweight increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes sevenfold, while losing just seven percent of our body weight can reduce risk by up to 60 percent. Let's add it to our list of reasons why staying fit, toned and in shape is a good idea, and use it as motivation to stay on top of our health goals for the rest of the year (and beyond!).

387 million.

That's how many people, according to recent figures from the International Diabetes Federation, are living with diabetes worldwide. To help put things in perspective, that's more than 42 times the population of the UAE.