

Risk factor: diabetes

"The urine of diabetics is wonderfully sweet as if imbued with honey or sugar."
Thomas Willis (1621-1675), physician to King Charles II, England

Diabetes is a risk factor for coronary heart disease and stroke, and is the most common cause of amputation that is not the result of an accident.

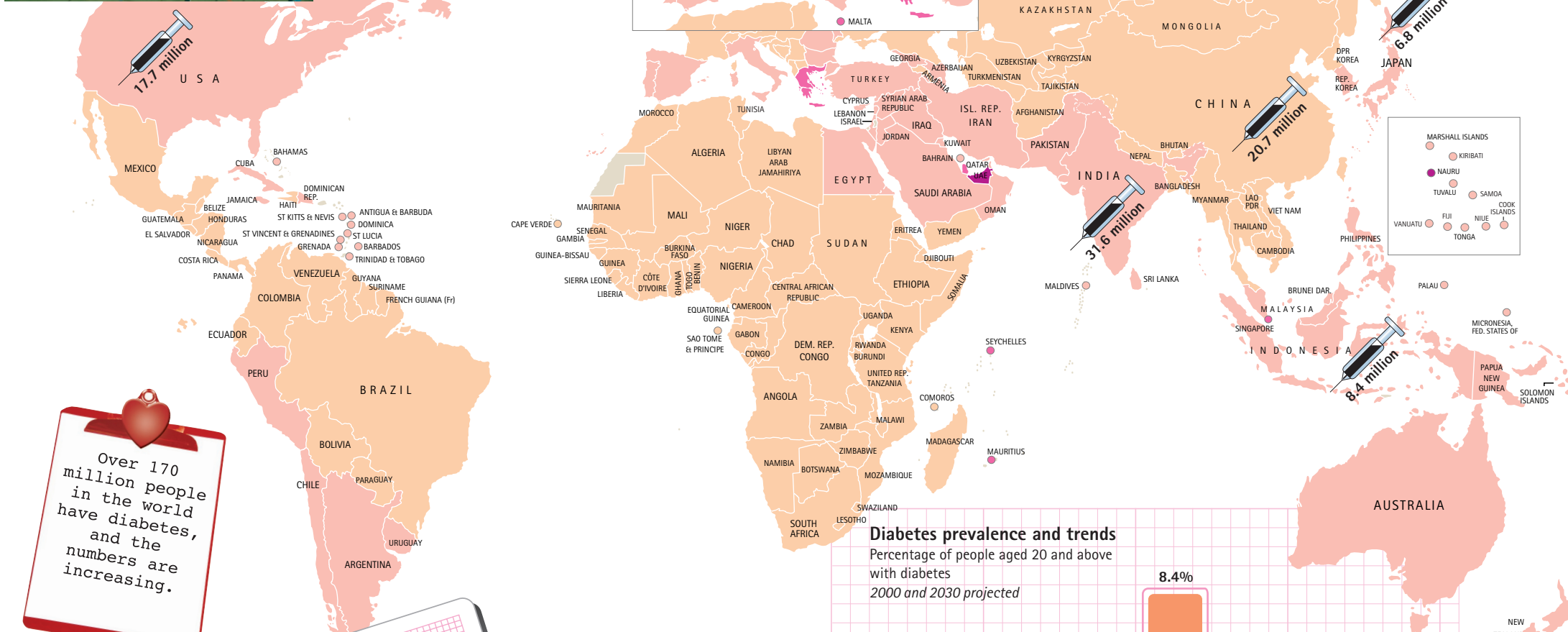
Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas and used by the body to regulate glucose (sugar). Diabetes occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin, or cannot use it properly, leading to too much sugar in the blood. Symptoms include thirst, excessive urination, tiredness, and unexplained weight loss.

There are two main types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes, in which the pancreas stops making insulin, accounts for 10% to 15% of cases. The majority of people with diabetes have type 2 disease, in which insulin is produced in smaller amounts than needed, or is not properly effective. This form is preventable, because it is related to physical inactivity, excess calorie intake and obesity. People with type 1 diabetes need insulin injections to lower blood sugar, but many people with type 2 do not.

At least half of all people with diabetes are unaware of their condition. Diabetes is more prevalent in developed countries, but modernization and lifestyle changes are likely to result in a future epidemic of diabetes in developing countries.



Lifestyle changes can be more effective than drugs in preventing type 2 diabetes.



Prevalence of diabetes

Percentage of people aged 20 and above with diabetes 2000

- 15% and above
- 10%–14.9%
- 5%–9.9%
- below 5%
- no data

Top 5 largest numbers of people aged 20 and above with diabetes 2000

Over 170 million people in the world have diabetes, and the numbers are increasing.

Lifestyle changes in childhood, in particular unhealthy diets and low exercise levels, are leading to an increasing prevalence of type 2 diabetes in children.

