



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection

Healthy Tips

Maintaining a healthy body weight, making wise food choices, avoiding over-eating, being physically active every day, and avoiding smoking are the keys to lower the risk of developing diabetes mellitus.

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Non-Communicable Diseases

Aware

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Are You Aware That

- ◆ In Hong Kong, diabetes mellitus (diabetes in short) is a growing public health problem. The number of death for which diabetes is certified as the underlying cause has increased by 36.4%, from 574 in 2002 to 783 in 2003. It ranks as the eighth leading cause of death in Hong Kong [1].
- ◆ In 2003, diabetes was responsible for nearly 13 300 in-patient discharges and deaths in Hospital Authority (HA) hospitals, in which 129 (1.0%) were among children aged 14 years or below [2].
- ◆ The Population Health Survey in 2003/2004 estimates that close to 214 000 (3.8%) Hong Kong people aged 15 years and above are currently living with diabetes. A further 97 800 (1.7%) persons have been told by a doctor or health professional that their blood sugar level is high [3].
- ◆ In terms of the distribution of diabetes cases by sex, females outnumbered males in deaths in 2003 (60.2% vs. 39.8%), in-patient discharges and deaths (50.4% vs. 49.6%), and prevalence (55.1% vs. 44.9%). The difference was mainly due to a larger proportion of females with diabetes in the 65 or above age group (Table 1).
- ◆ The burden of diabetes increases with age (Table 1). In 2003, the death rate of diabetes per 100 000 population escalated from 0.3 in persons aged 15-44 years to 5.5 in persons aged 45-64 years, and jumped substantially to 85.7 in persons aged 65 or above. The corresponding in-patient discharges and deaths rate also rose drastically from 41.9 to 244.0 and 982.0 in the respective age categories. Furthermore, the prevalence rate of diabetes per 100 000 persons aged 65 years or above (13 480.3) was about 3 and 19 times that of those aged 45-64 years (4 822.3) and 15-44 years (701.3) respectively.
- ◆ Of note, the statistics presented are nevertheless most likely an underestimation because diabetes may not be accurately reflected in hospital discharge records and death certificates. Besides, the true prevalence of diabetes or high blood sugar level in Hong Kong may again be underestimated as many people may have no symptoms and are not aware of having diabetes or high blood sugar.

Table 1: Burden of illness due to diabetes, Hong Kong, 2003

Age group	No. (rate*) of deaths [1]			No. (rate*) of in-patient discharges and deaths in HA hospitals [2]			No. (rate*) of people having diabetes [3]		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
14 or below	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	44 (8.0)	85 (16.4)	129 (12.1)	NA	NA	NA
15-44	5 (0.3)	6 (0.3)	11 (0.3)	777 (50.2)	609 (34.6)	1 386 (41.9)	7 563 (545.6)	14 321 (825.8)	21 883 (701.3)
45-64	51 (6.2)	39 (4.9)	90 (5.5)	2 290 (276.9)	1 687 (210.1)	3 977 (244.0)	40 620 (5 042.1)	44 962 (4 639.5)	85 582 (4 822.3)
65 or above	256 (69.5)	426 (99.7)	682 (85.7)	3 492 (947.9)	4 320 (1 011.5)	7 812 (982.0)	47 902 (12 530.0)	58 438 (14 373.8)	106 340 (13 480.3)
Total	312 (9.5)	471 (13.4)	783 (11.5)	6 603 (200.5)	6 701 (191.0)	13 304 (195.6)	96 085 (3 723.8)	117 721 (3 785.5)	213 805 (3 761.6)

Notes: * Rate per 100 000 population; NA means "Not Available".

Sources: [1] Mortality statistics, 2003 (provisional data). Department of Health, Census and Statistics Department.

[2] In-patient statistics, 2003 (provisional data). Hospital Authority.

[3] Population Health Survey 2003/04 (provisional data). Department of Health.

Awareness of Diabetes



Diabetes is a life-threatening and common condition. Lack of recognition of the seriousness, risk factors, warning signs and symptoms makes diabetes awareness an area of significant public health concern.

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not properly use or produce enough insulin—a hormone that helps cells process blood glucose into energy, resulting in having above normal blood glucose levels. Prolonged high blood glucose damages blood vessels and nerves, leading to complications such as heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease, nerve problems, infections, and leg ulcers which may result in amputations. There are two major types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease occurring when the pancreas no longer makes insulin, whereas type 2 diabetes develops when the insulin is produced but is used ineffectively. This is the more common type of diabetes.

Certain people are at greater risk of developing diabetes (see Box 1).

Box 1: Check each of the following items to see who are at higher than average risk of having the disease:

- ⊕ Relatives of people with type 2 diabetes
- ⊕ Individuals with elevated blood glucose
- ⊕ Individuals with overweight or abdominal obesity
- ⊕ Individuals with elevated blood pressure
- ⊕ Individuals with a sedentary lifestyle
- ⊕ Individuals with gestational diabetes
- ⊕ Individuals who are middle-aged or above

* * * * * Event Calendar * * * * *

To echo the [World Diabetes Day](#), designated on **14 November 2004**, the Central Health Education Unit of the Centre for Health Protection plans to launch a publicity campaign on diabetes in November 2004.

The promotional activities to be carried out are as follows:

- > **Poster campaign** will be held at health facilities, public facilities, schools and bus shelters between 5 November and 2 December 2004.
- > **Public lecture** on “Fight Obesity, Prevent Diabetes” will be conducted on 13 November 2004, 10:30am—12:00 noon, at the Space Museum, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon.

Those who are at higher risk of having the disease should be aware of the warning signs and symptoms (see Box 2). Of note, many people are not aware that they have the disease until signs of severe complications appear, such as blurred vision, numbness of legs or even heart trouble. Thus it is important for the high risk individuals to seek medical advice if indicated.

Box 2: Here are the signs and symptoms of diabetes that the high risk individuals should look for:

- ⊕ Increased urination and urine output, especially at night
- ⊕ Increased thirst
- ⊕ Increased hunger
- ⊕ Easy fatigue
- ⊕ Weight loss
- ⊕ Sores that do not heal
- ⊕ Recurrent vaginal candidiasis (females only)
- ⊕ Signs of severe complications, such as blurred vision, numbness, piercing pain or weakness of the legs, and heart trouble (chest pain, shortness of breath)

In many cases, diabetes can be prevented. Prevention includes awareness and prompt actions. A number of risk factors are modifiable and some simple lifestyle changes can lower the risk of getting diabetes. These include:

- Achieve and maintain an optimal body weight
- Make wise food choices and avoid over-eating
- Build up to 30 minutes of physical activities a day, at least 5 times a week
- Avoid or quit smoking

Besides, regular body check for the high risk individuals can uncover this “hidden” disease early.

* * * * * News Bites * * * * *

Worldwide, 3.2 million deaths are attributable to diabetes every year. It represents 8 700 deaths every day; or six deaths every minute. Furthermore, at least 171 million people are having diabetes and the figure is likely to more than double by 2030. The global increase in diabetes will occur because of population ageing and growth, and due to increasing trends towards obesity, unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyle. While most people with diabetes are above the age of retirement in developed countries, those most frequently affected are aged between 35 and 64 in the developing countries. (Source: Diabetes Action Now: An initiative of the World Health Organization and the International Diabetes Federation, 2004)