driving change to defeat diabetes
The diabetes challenge calls for new approaches

At Novo Nordisk, we are driven by the core belief that the alarming rise of diabetes is not inevitable. By working together with partners, we can change its trajectory – but we must act now.

More than 90 years of diabetes leadership has taught us that curbing the pandemic requires an extraordinary effort and focus from all sectors of society. Together, we must:

- address diabetes risk factors in urban settings
- work to ensure that people with diabetes are diagnosed earlier
- improve access to diabetes care
- support people in achieving better health outcomes.

This is how we drive change to defeat diabetes.

Defeating diabetes requires that we continue to innovate for the benefit of society. It also requires that we partner in redesigning healthcare systems to focus on value and outcomes, and that we continue addressing affordability and access to care around the world.

LARS FRUEGGAARD JØRGENSEN
President and chief executive officer, Novo Nordisk

The Rule of Halves illustrates the global diabetes situation. Actual rates of diagnosis, treatment, targets and outcomes vary in different countries.

To break the ‘Rule of Halves’ we need to drive change where the needs are greatest.
Vancouver is a partner city in the Cities Changing Diabetes programme. 43% of people living in Vancouver are overweight or have obesity, putting them at risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the future. To address diabetes, we need to start with prevention. Overweight and obesity, together with physical inactivity, are estimated to be responsible for a large proportion of the global diabetes burden. Interventions that change people’s unhealthy habits and diet, increase physical activity and lead to loss of excess body weight can prevent type 2 diabetes in people at high risk of developing diabetes.

Since 2014, as part of the Cities Changing Diabetes programme, we have collaborated in a unique public–private partnership with University College London, Steno Diabetes Center and eight partner cities – Copenhagen, Houston, Johannesburg, Mexico City, Rome, Shanghai, Tianjin and Vancouver – to map the urban diabetes challenge. Going forward, our focus is to use the findings to drive local actions and put diabetes on the agenda of those shaping cities. No organisation can do this alone. Success depends on our ability to build a global coalition of businesses, academics, city leaders, healthcare professionals and communities around a common cause – to make cities healthier.

Understand the social and cultural factors that shape what’s feasible and desirable for people in urban environments is critical to understanding diabetes and how we address it.

PROFESSOR DAVID NAPIER
University College London

More than half of the world’s population lives in urban areas, including two-thirds of all people with diabetes. This makes cities a focal point for addressing risk factors and driving change.

Cities are the front line for tackling diabetes

Increasingly, social and cultural factors are also being recognised for their relationship with the rising incidence of type 2 diabetes as well as for the opportunities they present for us to counter it.

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Professor David Napper
University College London
Millions of people with diabetes are undiagnosed and risk developing serious complications, including damage to the eyes, kidneys and heart. Half will have at least one complication by the time they are diagnosed. The unbearable burden on individuals, families and healthcare systems can and must be reduced.

Earlier diagnosis helps people gain control of their diabetes sooner and avoid complications. But the opportunity can be lost when people do not know that they are at risk and do not recognise the symptoms. Together with global health organisations, we drive awareness and provide free screening initiatives that reach millions of people with a simple message: Being overweight, having an unhealthy lifestyle or a family history of diabetes increases the risk of type 2 diabetes. Getting screened is the first step towards a healthier life with diabetes.

Beyond public awareness, more healthcare professionals must be educated about the benefits of earlier diagnosis. Screening people at high risk of developing diabetes is an effective way to reduce costly complications. Over the years, Novo Nordisk has engaged thousands of policymakers and key stakeholders worldwide to elevate diabetes and the importance of early diagnosis on the public health agenda. Building on this foundation, we continue to advocate for greater awareness to ensure that everyone has the best chance of living well with diabetes.

My father had diabetes, so when I started experiencing the symptoms, I visited my doctor. It’s better to know – if it’s not managed well it can progress.

Huw Bevan
Huw has type 2 diabetes and lives in the UK

one of 193 million reasons to diagnose diabetes earlier

The starting point for living well with diabetes is an early diagnosis.

415 million living with diabetes
half are undiagnosed

1 in 193 million reasons to diagnose diabetes earlier

The starting point for living well with diabetes is an early diagnosis.

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6 million people have undiagnosed diabetes

193 million people have undiagnosed diabetes

The starting point for living well with diabetes is an early diagnosis.
many people lack access to the care they need

The challenge of access to diabetes care touches every country of the world and disproportionately affects people in resource-poor settings.

Three in four people with diabetes live in low- and middle-income countries with limited healthcare capacity and a shortage of healthcare professionals who can effectively diagnose and treat diabetes. Lack of regular supply of diabetes medicine and equipment is among the barriers to effective diabetes care.

In 2002, Novo Nordisk established the World Diabetes Foundation, an independent trust. Since then, the Foundation has funded projects in 115 developing countries to support clinics, train doctors and nurses, raise awareness and advocate for national diabetes programmes.

Novo Nordisk is the largest provider of generic human insulin worldwide and has a broad product portfolio to cater for different income groups. In 2016, we renewed our long-standing Access to Insulin Commitment to provide low-priced human insulin for people with diabetes in the poorest parts of the world and to selected humanitarian organisations.

Through a range of partnership programmes, we continue to develop solutions for strengthening healthcare systems to ensure that people can access the care they need – no matter where they live.
it takes more than medicine to achieve better outcomes

Managing diabetes well and getting the right support can help people with diabetes live active lives with fewer limitations. Around half of the people treated for diabetes do not achieve their treatment targets and face serious health complications as a result. Decades of research shows us that the burden of living with diabetes goes beyond the challenge of managing blood sugar levels. It affects every aspect of daily life. Finding it hard to make treatment part of a routine, worrying about hypoglycaemia or having difficulty explaining concerns to a doctor can all negatively impact a person’s quality of life – as well as the ability to manage their condition.

Only by empowering people with diabetes can we drive change. We provide a broad portfolio of innovative treatment options and delivery devices, but we know that it takes more than medicine for people to achieve better health outcomes. We address this by advocating for the unmet needs of people with diabetes and educating healthcare professionals and patients in overcoming barriers to good self-management. We are also working to find a cure and ultimately defeat diabetes.
changing diabetes is a partnership effort

The scale and complexity of the diabetes challenge demands a partnership approach.

Our determination to defeat diabetes will never fail, but we do not underestimate the task ahead and we certainly do not have all the answers.

The scale and complexity of the challenge is beyond any one organisation, company or discipline. Only through innovative partnerships – with healthcare professionals, patients, policymakers, academics and non-governmental organisations – can we hope to make a real and sustainable impact.

The work we have started in cities brings together new partners and perspectives to tackle the pandemic where it is growing fastest. In low-resource settings, our programmes are steering partnership initiatives to build healthcare capacity and improve availability of medicine and care. Millions of people rely on us for treatment. It is our responsibility to turn ground-breaking research into medicines that make a difference to the lives of people with diabetes and other serious chronic conditions. To achieve this, we work closely with universities and other academic partners to constantly pioneer innovation.

Through partnerships, we will continue driving change to defeat diabetes with an unfailing belief: it can be done.

Through a landmark research collaboration with the University of Oxford focused on type 2 diabetes, we’re bringing together some of the world’s sharpest minds in the field of diabetes to seek new targets for therapeutic innovation.

MADS KROGSGAARD THOMSEN
Executive vice president and chief science officer, Novo Nordisk

In 2017, a new partnership, the Novo Nordisk Research Center Oxford was established to discover novel treatments for type 2 diabetes.
References

For more than 90 years, Novo Nordisk has been changing diabetes. Our key contribution is to discover, develop and manufacture better biological medicines and make them accessible to people with diabetes throughout the world. However, it takes more than medicine to defeat diabetes. Our Changing Diabetes® commitment focuses on the greatest unmet needs: addressing diabetes risk factors in urban areas, ensuring that people with diabetes are diagnosed earlier and have access to adequate care in order to be able to live their lives with as few limitations as possible. Working in partnerships, we will continue to drive change to defeat diabetes with an unfailing belief: it can be done.

Discover more about Changing Diabetes® at novonordisk.com/changingdiabetes