

# Diabetes in Indian and South Asian People



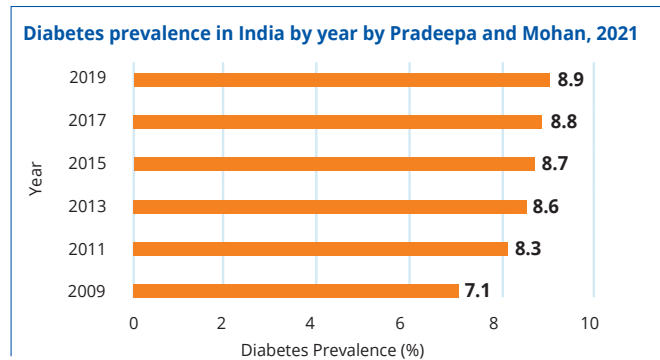
**India is a country with a very big diabetes problem, with 9% of adults in the population estimated as having diabetes, and this figure set to more than double in the next 10 years<sup>1</sup>**

A lot of people who have diabetes are not diagnosed, meaning that this rate is probably even higher than current estimates show.

In India, urban populations have a six-fold higher prevalence of diabetes than rural areas, and older age groups have higher prevalence than younger ones. With most immigration coming from urban areas, this translates into a very high-risk population moving to other countries.

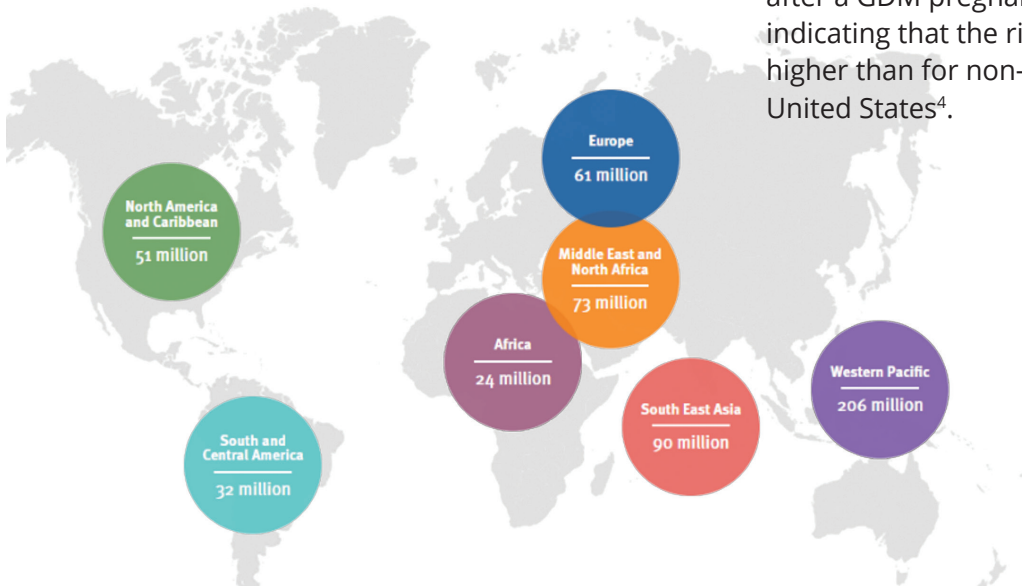
There is also increasingly evidence that people from India and other South Asian countries face an increased risk of diabetes, both due to genetic and socio-economic factors. Recent research points to genetic and physiological differences

for people of Indian heritage that raise their risk of diabetes, causing earlier onset of the disease in terms of both age and BMI<sup>1</sup>. In addition, there are many issues that recent immigrants and their children face when moving to a new country, which are also associated with an increased risk of developing diabetes and its complications.



The risk of gestational diabetes mellitus for pregnant women in the South Asian community has been estimated to be between 50-100% higher<sup>2,3</sup>. Worryingly, this increased risk is also apparent for the risk of developing type 2 diabetes after a GDM pregnancy, with some research indicating that the risk for South Asian women is higher than for non-Hispanic white women in the United States<sup>4</sup>.

## Diabetes around the world 2021





Chithirai festival in Blacktown 2023

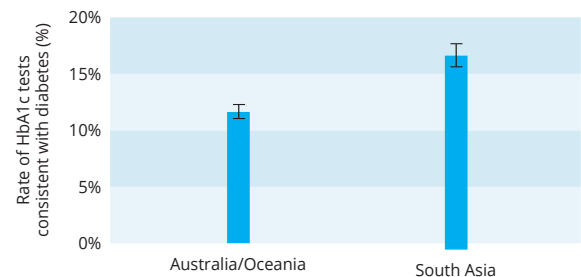
This risk increase ties into the general trend of type 2 diabetes. Previous research has shown that South Indian people living in Australia have a dramatically increased risk of developing diabetes, with one study finding an increase of 5x in the odds of people born in South Asia having diabetes when compared to those born in Oceania<sup>5</sup>. This is mirrored in data collected in Blacktown and Mount Drutt Emergency Departments. As part of an ongoing diabetes detection initiative, every person who attends Blacktown or Mount Drutt hospitals and has blood taken in emergency also has an HbA1c test added as well. This looks at average blood glucose, and is the primary method for screening for diabetes in Australia.

This reveals that people born in South Asian (specifically India, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) are at a dramatically increased risk of testing positive for diabetes in our community, with a 60% increased odds of having diabetes when compared to those born in Australia or New Zealand.

This increased risk is driving a huge additional burden for the South Asian community in terms of the many preventable complications of

diabetes. There is an urgent need to improve the situation in western Sydney, and make our society more equitable, so that no community is at such an increased risk.

Rates of diabetes in Blacktown/Mt Drutt ED testing corrected for age and sex (n=220,000)



#### Sources

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5. Abouzeid M, Philpot B, Janus ED, Coates MJ, Dunbar JA. Type 2 diabetes prevalence varies by socio-economic status within and between migrant groups: analysis and implications for Australia. *BMC Public Health*. 2013;13(1):252.