

Everyday habits that bring diabetes to your doorstep

MUSARRAT SALIM

November 14 marks World Diabetes Day 2025. According to the latest International Diabetes Federation (IDF) report, 1 out of 9 adults is living with diabetes as of 2025, and 40% of them are unaware that they even have diabetes. The majority of these adults reside in low- and middle-income countries, such as Bangladesh.

Patients with diabetes are more vulnerable to other diseases like heart attacks, high blood pressure, and stroke (which is a major cause of death in the country). They even have an increased risk of facing long-term kidney and nerve damage. Once you visit the doctor to address your symptoms, the most common advice is to exercise daily and to take short walks more often. Additionally, there are other ways to manage existing diabetic symptoms or help young people prevent diabetes altogether. Now, let's shed some light on some daily habits that disrupt your blood sugar management:

WHITE RICE WITH EVERY MEAL:

In most South Asian households, a typical meal consists of white rice and curries. Although the type of curry varies daily, processed white rice is consistently served on the plate throughout the week. Eating white rice for meals provides a significant portion of carbohydrates daily, which can increase blood sugar levels

multiple times a day due to its high glycemic index. Therefore, it is essential to control portions and limit your intake of white rice.

DAILY TEA WITH SUGAR AND BISCUITS:

Milk tea is typically enjoyed with multiple cubes of sugar

in a sugar crash. If you have this habit, try switching up your drink and having green tea or black tea occasionally. You can also substitute the sugar with a little organic honey.

GOING TO BED STRAIGHT AFTER DINNER:

After dinner, it is recommended

SWEETS FOR EVERY OCCASION:

In Bangladesh, it is a cultural norm to celebrate special occasions with lots of sweet-soaked treats like roshomalai, shondesh, and various pithas. The main ingredients of celebratory snacks are, as you already know, sugar and milk. What may seem

LATE-NIGHT PHONE SCROLLING:

Disrupted sleep can negatively affect your body's response to insulin. More glucose will remain in the bloodstream as a result, and the risk of diabetes increases. Insufficient sleep also causes hormonal changes, which in turn increase the craving for unhealthy food.

JUICES AND DIET SODA:

Juices and diet sodas contain high amounts of natural or artificial sugars. Just one glass (300ml) of juice can have up to 30 grams of sugar, while the WHO-recommended daily sugar intake is capped at 25 grams. Try making your own smoothies and healthy juices at home with less sugary fruits. Some recommendations are turmeric and ginger shots or beetroot juice.

It is hard to change habits drastically overnight. That is why it is recommended to make changes step by step and to practice moderation eventually.

On the occasion of World Diabetes Day, several events are happening. You can join the events for awareness and free screening (<https://worlddiabetesday.org/activities/events/free-diabetes-screening-awareness-program/>), while the Bangladesh Endocrine Society is organising the Diabetes Day Run 2025 at Hatirjheel, Dhaka (<https://bes.org.bd/>).

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and accompanied by biscuits. This is a prominent snack (and sometimes even breakfast) among adults in Bangladesh. Tea, by itself, is naturally healthy, but adding sugar can add excess calories and result

to wait at least 2 hours before going to bed. Otherwise, you will experience blood sugar spikes and indigestion. The best practice is to go on a short walk for at least 15 minutes after dinner.

like a comforting treat is actually the reason for early diabetes in many adults in Bangladesh. Instead of sweets, try indulging and gifting fresh flowers, exotic fruit baskets, mixed nuts, and other non-sweet items.

Breakthrough in sight restoration

STAR HEALTH REPORT

A pioneering brain-computer interface (BCI) implant has restored functional central vision to patients suffering from geographic atrophy (GA), a severe form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) — a leading cause of blindness worldwide. The results of this landmark clinical trial have been published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM), marking what scientists call a “paradigm shift” in vision restoration.

Developed by California-based Science Corporation, the PRIMA implant consists of a tiny wireless chip placed under the retina, paired with specialised glasses that project infrared light. The device converts the light into electrical signals, stimulating the remaining retinal cells to transmit visual information to the brain — effectively acting as artificial photoreceptors.

The multi-centre trial, conducted across 17 clinical sites in five countries, evaluated 38 patients who had lost central vision due to GA. Results showed that 84 per cent of participants regained the ability to read letters, numbers and words, with an average improvement equivalent to more than five lines on the standard eye chart. Importantly, no significant deterioration in peripheral natural vision was observed.

“This study confirms that, for the first time, we can restore functional central vision in patients blinded by geographic atrophy,” said Dr Frank Holz, lead author

and Chair of Ophthalmology at the University Hospital of Bonn. “The implant represents a paradigm shift in treating late-stage AMD.”

Professor José-Alain Sahel, senior co-author from the University of Pittsburgh and Sorbonne Université, described the results as “something we couldn't have dreamt of when we started more than a decade ago.”

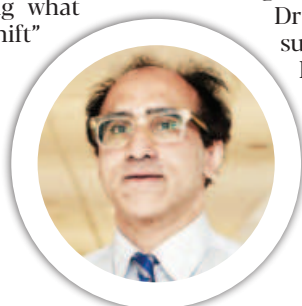
Dr Mahi Muqit, a vitreoretinal surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, added, “Artificial vision is the only approach that actually gives patients any vision back — and that's what they want.”

The PRIMA implant, measuring just 2 millimetres wide and half the thickness of a human hair, demonstrated a strong safety profile. Most post-surgical side effects resolved within two months, and the Data Safety Monitoring Board recommended the device for European market approval. Regulatory processes are

now underway in both Europe and the United States.

Science Corporation's CEO, Max Hodak, said the company's mission is to develop technologies that “provide hope to patients in need and have the ability to transform lives.”

If approved, PRIMA could become the world's first commercially available treatment capable of restoring — rather than merely preserving — sight for patients with advanced macular degeneration.



Associate Professor Mahi Muqit, a British-Bangladeshi Consultant ophthalmic surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital

Guidance to address drastic global health financing cuts

The World Health Organisation (WHO) released new guidance for countries on ways to counter the immediate and long-term effects of sudden and severe cuts to external funding, which are disrupting the delivery of essential health services in many countries.

The new guidance, called “*Responding to the health financing emergency: immediate measures and longer-term shifts*”, provides a suite of policy options for countries to cope with the sudden financing shocks, and bolster efforts to mobilize and implement sufficient and sustainable financing for national health systems.

External health aid is projected to drop by 30% to 40% in 2025 compared with 2023, causing immediate and severe disruption to health services in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). WHO survey data from 108 LMICs collected in March 2025 indicate that funding cuts have reduced critical services — including maternal care, vaccination, health emergency preparedness and response, and disease surveillance — by up to 70% in some countries. More than 50 countries have reported job losses among health and care workers, along with major disruptions to health worker training programmes.

“Sudden and unplanned cuts to aid have hit many countries hard, costing lives and jeopardizing hard-won health gains,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. “But in the crisis lies an opportunity for countries to transition away from aid dependency towards sustainable self-reliance, based on domestic resources. WHO's new guidance will help countries to better mobilise, allocate, prioritise and use funds to support the delivery of health services that protect the most vulnerable.”



PHOTO: WHO

This year's funding cuts have compounded years of persistent health financing challenges for countries, including rising debt burdens, inflation, economic uncertainty, high out-of-pocket spending, systemic budget underfunding and heavy reliance on external aid.

The new guidance builds on WHO's commitment to help all countries strengthen and sustain robust health systems, built on a commitment to universal health coverage, underpinned by strong primary health services delivering essential care to all who need it.

It also aligns with existing World Health Assembly mandates, including resolutions on “Strengthening health financing globally” and “Economics of health for all,” to translate global commitments into actionable policy steps. WHO and its partners are committed to providing technical support, analytics and peer learning to countries to manage the health financing crises and navigate the transition, including through the new UHC Knowledge Hub, a partnership with the Government of Japan and the World Bank, set to be launched in December 2025.

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

FUNCTIONAL CHOCOLATE

Turning pleasure into purpose

RAISA MEHZABEEN

Chocolate, once dismissed as a guilty pleasure, is now reclaiming its identity as a functional food. No longer merely a sugary indulgence, functional chocolate is emerging as a smart fusion of taste and nutrition, blending traditional cocoa goodness with scientifically backed bioactive compounds. It symbolises how food innovation can transform pleasure into purpose.

Functional chocolate refers to chocolate products enriched with added nutrients, herbs, probiotics, adaptogens, or superfoods designed to provide specific health benefits beyond basic nutrition. It sits at the crossroads of food science and wellness — where indulgence meets intention. The transformation of chocolate from a treat into a tool for

better health reveals how consumer demands and scientific progress are reshaping the food landscape.

Cocoa itself has always carried a strong nutritional profile. Dark chocolate is naturally rich in flavonoids — powerful antioxidants known to support heart health, improve blood flow, and reduce oxidative stress. But the new wave of functional chocolates goes further, integrating ingredients such as ashwagandha for stress relief, collagen for skin elasticity, MCT oil for energy, magnesium for sleep, and even probiotics for gut

balance. The result is a redefined chocolate experience that serves both body and mind.

Chocolate, once the symbol of temptation, may now become the symbol of transformation. Functional chocolate isn't just a trend; it is a testament to how innovation and nutrition can coexist beautifully — proving that even the sweetest pleasures can be good for you when crafted with purpose.

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