

Study Highlights India-Specific Nutritional Needs in Diabetes Management

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Dr. Reddy's and Nestlé Health Science Limited, a joint venture between Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd and Nestlé India Limited, referred to hereafter as Nestlé India, released the key findings of a new research paper published in an international journal, "Diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome & Obesity". The paper highlights the need for an India-specific approach to diabetes nutrition that extends beyond blood glucose management and addresses the metabolic, nutritional, and lifestyle realities.

Drawing on insights from 60 endocrinologists and diabetologists across India, the paper examines key characteristics that distinguish patients with diabetes in India and offers practical considerations for improving nutrition management in routine clinical practice.

India is home to one of the world's largest populations of people living with diabetes. An overwhelming 98 per cent of experts agreed that the condition has distinct characteristics that require tailored nutrition strategies, while 86 per cent considered recognizing these differences important to effective diabetes management.

According to the experts surveyed for the paper, the pertinent defining features of the Indian diabetes phenotype include high carbohydrate intake (82 per cent), central obesity (78 per cent), insulin resistance (76 per cent), inadequate protein intake (75 per cent), poor lean muscle mass (69 per cent), and genetic predisposition (67 per cent). These factors should be carefully considered when designing nutrition interventions for Indian patients.

The growing overlap between diabetes and obesity, often referred to as "diabesity," emerged as another key finding. According to the experts, 61 per cent of respondents stated that more than half of their patients with diabetes are overweight or obese, underscoring the increasing prevalence of excess weight among people living with diabetes in India. At the same time, long-term dietary adherence remains a significant challenge, with most experts reporting that no more than 25 per cent of patients consistently follow dietary recommendations for six months or longer. These findings reinforce the need for nutrition strategies that address glycemic control, weight management, metabolic health and overall nutrition outcomes.

Commenting on the findings, Dr. Banshi Saboo, Honorary Secretary, Diabetes India; and Past President, RSSDI, "The findings on diabesity and dietary adherence point to two of the most significant challenges clinicians face in managing diabetes over the long term. Many patients are simultaneously dealing with excess weight and nutritional gaps, while maintaining dietary changes over several months can be difficult. This makes it important for clinicians to look beyond prescribing dietary restrictions and focus on approaches that patients can realistically sustain as part of their everyday lives. Supporting patients through achievable dietary changes, appropriate nutritional intake and regular monitoring can be critical to improving long-term diabetes outcomes."

The paper advocates individualized Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) and provides expert guidance on the role of clinically proven Diabetes-Specific Nutrition Formulas (DSNFs) in supporting selected patient groups. The paper offers practical

considerations to help healthcare professionals determine when and where these nutritional interventions may be appropriate as part of comprehensive diabetes care.