



Is Diabetes Deadlier Than COVID-19?

After an extremely difficult past 16 months, it appears as though the tide may finally be turning with regard to coronavirus in many countries around the world. The UAE is one of the best performing nations with regards to its vaccination efforts, as over half of its 9.8 million populace has received a least one dosage.

But even as [COVID-19 testing has changed over the past year](#) and vaccination candidates have brought hope to an eventual escape from the pandemic, the UAE is still grappling with perhaps an even greater killer – diabetes. Indeed, by sheer mortality rates alone, diabetes is at least three times deadlier than the virus, while the fact that one in five Emiratis suffers from the condition does not bode well for the future.

The “silent pandemic”

The latest statistics show that around 425 million people across the globe suffer from diabetes, with more than one million of those residing in the UAE. That figure is expected to more than double to 2.2 million people by 2040, while the fact that there is no way to estimate undiagnosed cases means that the real rate of diabetes patients may be far higher than official records indicate.

In 2019, diabetes was responsible for 4.2 million premature deaths around the world. That is over three times the number of lives claimed by COVID-19 last year, while it is believed that at least 40% of those who succumbed to the virus were suffering from diabetes. It's well known that diabetes can increase the risk of developing other serious conditions, such as kidney failure, blindness, strokes and heart complications.

Despite this – and despite the fact that Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for around 90% of all diagnoses worldwide, is entirely preventable – there is far less attention devoted to the issue than that commanded by coronavirus at the present time. Of course, the rapid transmission of COVID-19 makes it perhaps more fearsome than diabetes, but it's certainly not more fatal than the chronic condition.

Taking action

The total number of diabetes sufferers has quadrupled in the last 40 years, according to data supplied by the WHO. While the increased frequency and improved methods



of testing will inevitably account for some of that increase, lifestyle factors have played a far greater role.

In particular, the deterioration of the average person's diet is responsible for a subsequent drop-off in their health. Excessive consumption of sugary goods (with the high-fructose corn syrup that's found in fruit juices and soft drinks a particularly dangerous ingredient) is thought to be the principal culprit, alongside a sedentary lifestyle with a glaring lack of exercise.

However, the good news is that the rising tide of diabetes diagnoses can be reversed in a straightforward and affordable manner – if people are prepared to take steps to safeguard their health. That means watching their calorific intake, cutting down on sugar and incorporating plentiful exercise into their daily lives. While it might not sound like a massive commitment, it could mean the difference between life and death, so it's a good idea to get tested and make changes sooner rather than later.