

Can India remove the infamous tag of World Diabetics Capital ?

For a progressive nation that is making a steady progress in healthcare, the negative reputation need utmost attention of policy makers

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by Navneet Singh

Vice President Asia Pacific and Head of South Asia region at PureCircle

On the global health stage, [Diabetes](#) is one of the most talked topic. Health advocates are now admitting that if the diabetics population will keep on growing at this alarming rate, it will soon emerge as the biggest epidemics of modern era. It is sadly the fourth leading cause of death in developed countries making it one the most deadly Non Communicable disease. As per a report by the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Public Health Foundation of India and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 72 million Indians suffer from Type-2 diabetes today and is expected to almost double to 134 million by 2025. Unfortunately on the global health stage, India bears the infamous tag of being the Diabetic Capital of the world. For a progressive nation that is making a steady progress in healthcare, the negative reputation need utmost attention of [policy](#) makers, healthcare system and public at large. We can't afford to ignore the growing menace of Diabetes and other NCDs.

[Sedentary lifestyle](#) and unhealthy diet patterns are key factors driving the growth of Non Communicable diseases in the country. As per WHO, Noncommunicable diseases kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all deaths globally. Each year, 15 million people die from a NCD between the ages of 30 and 69 years; over 85% of these "premature" deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. WHO's fact sheet on diabetes states that an estimated 3.4 million deaths are caused due to high [blood sugar](#) in the world.

Indians are increasingly becoming [sugar](#) dependent and hence the country is facing some large public health challenges including the second highest number of obese children in the world after China. Diets with low nutrition content and high salt, sugar and fat are fueling

the population of obese children making it one of the biggest threat for country's health system. A new report by a commission formed by the [World Health Organization](#) has identified 'marketing of unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic beverages' as a major factor in the increase in numbers of obese and overweight children, particularly in developing world.

Dietary habits in India are moving towards an unhealthy direction. To tackle diabetes the need of the hour is to generate wide spread awareness and create a robust environment to scale up prevention as lifestyle and dietary habits play a major role in the development of diabetes.

The changing lifestyle and rising consumption of packaged food and beverages is creating a demand to reduce calories and cut down sugar from Indian diet. With the rising issues of public health; zero calorie and natural food ingredients have a major role to play and can potentially become a key player in India's strategy to tackle these issues. Moderation is key to handle diabetes and here natural sweetener and healthy ingredients such as [Stevia](#) can become impactful tool in sugar moderation.

One of the biggest shifts is that today sugar reduction has switched from being a trend to a well established norm. A new class of health-conscious people is emerging out of every stratum of the society and is now demanding for clean labels and low or zero calorie products. As per a new research from global market intelligence agency Mintel, nearly half of consumers in India aim to live a healthier lifestyle. New formulation with natural ingredients and wellness benefits is corresponding with the consumer expectations.

Today Indian consumer is strongly inclined to natural solutions that improve health and wellness. Consumers are increasingly becoming aware of the need to embrace healthier lifestyles and fight lifestyle led Non Communicable diseases. 'The Eat Right Movement' launched by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is a great initiative to promote safe and healthy food in India. As part of the initiative, a majority of Indian and global F&B giants took pledge to reduce the level of salt, sugar and fat in food products. 'Ek Chammach Kam' campaign launched jointly by Municipal corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) and Public Health Department, also created high decibel awareness about non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India.

Doctors, nutritionists, responsible food and beverage companies and public health officials along with policy makers can lead to fight diabetes by endorsing healthy dietary practices at large level. Together, the health and F&B system can support the country in removing the infamous tag of being the Diabetic capital of the world.